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THE  
COURT AND CAMP  
OF DAVID.

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BY  
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Camp*  
REV. P. C. HEADLEY,

AUTHOR OF "WOMEN OF THE BIBLE," "MASSACHUSETTS IN THE REBELLION,"  
"JOSEPHINE," "LAFAYETTE," ETC.

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## PREFACE.

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THE "Court and Camp of David" was written to present, in popular form, an outline history of the great Hebrew monarch and his monarchy. His genius neither has been, nor is likely soon to be, appreciated by even the Christian world generally, because of the single crime which threw its shadow over his reign. This is also, doubtless, the reason why we have so few biographies, written from the sacred annals, of this wonderful man.

The present humble volume is not designed to be a commentary, nor an eulogium ; but an impartial yet necessarily incomplete narrative, in the light of revelation, of the early life,



the regal glory, the martial achievements, the musical culture, and the deep religious experiences, of the "son of Jesse."

The many striking lessons, in which his career abounds, cannot fail to interest and benefit every reader of the Scriptures, especially the young.

We are indebted, in the preparation of the book, to the suggestive pages of Herder, Horne, Kitto, Lowth, and Gilfillan.

Hoping that it may be no unworthy contribution to the religious literature of the home and Sabbath school, it is given to the public, desiring most of all the blessing of Israel's God upon the endeavor to honor him, and lead others more deeply and lovingly to study his Word.

P. C. H.



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Bethlehem.



THE  
COURT AND CAMP OF DAVID.

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*Part First.*

FROM THE PALM-TREE'S SHADE TO A THRONE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MINSTREL SHEPHERD WITH HIS FLOCKS.

ETHLEHEM! a name whose very sound is musical and stirring to the soul. The best music of earth and heaven is forever associated with it; and also the highest glory of the Hebrew and the heavenly monarchy. For there "David, the son of Jesse," sang to the melody of his harp; and, ages after, the angels of God filled the midnight air with their harmonies. From a political horizon, darkened by the frown of Jehovah upon the disloyal prayer for a king, the regal splendor of Israel rose



## 8     *The Court and Camp of David.*

to its zenith under the sceptre of a Bethlehemite. And in this humble city the King of kings lay incarnate, while his glory flooded the hills around the place of his birth.

On the eastern side of Bethlehem, across the Dead Sea, rose the bold mountains of Moab, from which Moses had his first and farewell glance of the "promised land," and beneath whose shadow, until their sad return to that city, lived Ruth and Naomi. The town lies among hills which are now terraced with vineyards, and golden with grain in its season. Not far from it, on some green slope, or in a quiet valley, was the home of David.

The family residence was an old homestead. The estate, it seems, fell to the lot of Salmon, one of the spies to Jericho, and a prince in Judah, when Joshua divided the land of Canaan. He married Rahab, who saved his life; and his son Boaz was the grandfather of Jesse, and the kinsman of Naomi. Boaz married Ruth, the young Moabitish widow, two and a half centuries before. The lovely Ruth, who said to her Jewish mother, "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people



shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried," did not dream that a grandson would be born in Bethlehem who should be the world's noblest King.

The history of David, in its very outline, is grander than any other royal annals. He was the first truly pious monarch in the world. Never before or since, has a nation reached its greatest strength and power under the sceptre of its *second* sovereign; and no prince ever equalled him in genius, and influence over succeeding generations. It is not strange that there should be a fascination, which the flight of time does not diminish, about this wonderful life.

Neither the day nor year of David's birth is recorded. We have no pleasant stories of his boyhood. How natural is the sigh of regret over this silence in revelation! but in his word and providence God does not gratify human desire and curiosity. His own glory and our salvation are ever before his infinite mind.

But somewhere in Bethlehem David was born, about ten hundred and sixty-five years



before Jesus slept there in a manger. It was an ancient town in the land of Canaan, even when Jesse's sheep were grazing on its hill-sides, twenty-nine centuries ago. Rachel, the beautiful wife of Jacob, died and was buried there seven hundred years previously, when Isaac was journeying from Padan-aram into Palestine. It lay six miles south of Salem, or Shalum, the site of Jerusalem, the "city of the great King."

David in his early youth became a shepherd, watching by day his flocks grazing in the fenceless fields. Sitting in the shade of the date-palm, with his harp he beguiled the hours, composing the songs which rang out sweetly upon the air of his solitude.

God had ordered the circumstances of the young hermit's life as if on purpose to cultivate his genius for poetry and music. The "Father of lights" knows how to educate for highest usefulness, and its enduring fame, his children, and will guide and aid the trusting, earnest soul aspiring to reach the goal of its true destiny.

Around the shepherd were the gentle, patient, obedient flocks. Between him and





David the Shepherd. Page 10.







the bold summits bordering the sea, there was a rich and varied landscape of vines, with their delicious clusters trailing field and forest; and, beyond these, the bleached and barren cliffs. Above him was the glorious sky of the east, resplendent by day with sunlight and many-hued clouds, and at night magnificent with the moon and stars.

Often, while looking towards the Dead Sea, whose misty gulf was visible in the distance, David must have been lost in meditation upon the past history of his nation. The calling of Abraham; the worldly, fatal choice of Lot, who "pitched his tent towards Sodom;" the bondage in Egypt; the plagues, the midnight departure, and the Red Sea's passage; and, to crown the marvellous deliverance, the long, weary wanderings in the wilderness; — occupied many of the hours of the undisturbed Oriental days.

He knew why there was a king in Israel.

The first form of government over men, a theocracy, his devout spirit still loved. Theocracy is from the Greek word *Theos*; that is, God. For Jehovah ruled by written commands and revelations of his will, by mes-



sages from heaven, dreams, signs, and wonders. He would have continued to be the only and welcome sovereign of his people, had they been content with his paternal care. The patriarchal rule was like that of the family, only extending over the large company of servants and others connected with a household. Gradually the separate plantations became united in a social compact for mutual protection, having a chief. Still the government was a theocracy; God was the recognized King.

When Israel was made a distinct nation, the twelve tribes, which sprang from the twelve sons of Jacob, had each also a leader. These "elders" were assembled whenever any matter of general interest demanded their united counsels.

The high priest was the visible representative of the Redeemer of his people.

The judges, who were appointed after the Hebrews entered Canaan, resembled governors, having power to declare war and make peace for the nation, but wearing no badges of distinction. Jehovah revealed through them his will, and was still the glorious King



of Israel. With the increase in population, and decrease in religious feeling, the Hebrews gradually ceased to appreciate their high distinction, and, dazzled with the pomp and power of pagan monarchies around them, became tired of the simplicity and blessings of God's holy sovereignty. Besides, there were dissensions and bitter strifes among the people attending their departures from the Lord.

It was with the Jewish nation, as it will be with the great American republic, if Puritan faith and works decline, until practical atheism prevails in our "goodly land." The people will throw off wholesome restraints, become factious, and corrupt in morals, until a monarchy will be the natural resort of the people as a protection against their own passions.

David was familiar with this transition from a theocracy to monarchy, attended by the faithful warning of God against the mad experiment. Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, and a splendid man in personal appearance, but with a bad heart, was the first monarch. David was contented to live



quietly in Bethlehem, while Saul and his counsellors were conducting the frequent wars and the affairs of state. Probably he did not know that his wicked sovereign was the victim of remorse, goaded by his evil passions to despondency and despair. His gentle yet brave spirit was satisfied with his flocks, his harp, and his home. One day, while David was thus living in romantic seclusion, dreaming of no higher destiny, God was speaking about him to the prophet Samuel. This aged and excellent seer, together with his sons, was the last of the judges.

Whether the Lord called to his venerable servant from the clear sky above him, or as he did to the child many years before, with a still small voice heard within, we do not know. But the communications were perfectly understood, and were worthy of their source.

Samuel was at Ramah; and God told him to go to Bethlehem and anoint a son of one Jesse, to be the abandoned Saul's successor to the throne of Israel.

Samuel was deeply troubled. For if the



king should hear of the visit to Bethlehem and its object, he would be slain for treason. But God was better to him than his fears, as he is to every trusting one. Again, he spoke to his servant from the "excellent glory," and bade him select a victim for sacrifice, and inform the king that he was going to Bethlehem to make an offering unto the Lord.

This was true; but it was designed to conceal the marvellous scene which soon would transpire by the altar.

Samuel then took a heifer and started for Bethlehem, musing along his solitary way upon the strange events before him. At length vine-clad, olive-crowned Bethlehem burst upon his thoughtful vision. A little later, and there were seen coming towards him the elders of the city, intensely excited at the unexpected appearance of the venerable and famous seer. They tremblingly inquired if he came upon a peaceful errand. He assured them he only wanted an altar for sacrifice. Their fears were calmed, and they accepted an invitation to attend the sacred service.



Soon the stones were piled, and the victim ready. Among the worshippers was the household of Jesse, excepting the youngest son, about twenty years of age. This lad was left with his flocks, either because it was unsafe to leave them unguarded, or Samuel may have told Jesse his secret mission, and the father thought David too young to be included among the candidates for the crown. When the sacred rite was over, Samuel commenced his prophetic scrutiny of the noble brotherhood—a group of sons rarely seen in any age or land.

Eliab was the eldest. A finely-developed man in every respect, he attracted at once and intensely the attention of the prophet. He looked upon the princely form and mien of Eliab, his ripened manhood and flashing eye, expecting to receive the divine intimation that he was to be the successor of Saul.

Instead of this agreement with Samuel's choice, Jehovah said to him, in accents unheard by those around him, "Look not on his countenance, nor on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on



the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

O, how deeply should we feel this great and stirring truth in our judgment of ourselves and of earthly good and glory!

Eliab retired from the ordeal; and the six remaining brothers present passed in succession before the prophet-judge, while all eyes watched the little procession with silent interest. With painful suspense Samuel looked upon the last of the number, for no signal of the Lord's choice of a king came from his "secret pavilion." Samuel was perplexed and bewildered. Turning to Jesse, he inquired if these were all the children he had. The astonished father replied that there was besides them, the youngest boy, tending the sheep. The intelligence was like a shaft of light in a darkened room, to the troubled mind of Samuel.

With the earnestness of haste and hope he said, "Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither." A messenger was despatched to the hill-sides of Bethlehem for the lonely shepherd. How the summons must have startled the dreaming poet, and



awakened in him an inexpressible wonder! What could Samuel want of him, was the question which stirred his heart as he hastened to the altar.

The moment the handsome, manly, and modest shepherd-boy stood before the solemn seer, the voice of the Lord came to his listening soul, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Samuel raised the horn of oil above the fair young brow, and poured upon it the consecrating seal. We can easily imagine the expression of amazement that spread over the faces of the spectators around the shrine of sacrifice; while, upon the bewildered prince fell the breath of a divine inspiration. The gratified, tranquil prophet returned to Ramah, and the son of Jesse to his flocks. How long afterwards he watched them with tender care, often recalling with prayerful interest the prophetic signal of a royal destiny, we are not told. But it is evident that he was the same unambitious minstrel shepherd as before, waiting upon the sovereign will that had called him to be the heir of a throne.

Although, long ago, God ceased to select men for high places of power, or any service



for him, by a direct revelation, he does, by his providence and spirit, choose, for the accomplishment of his purposes, persons fitted for a crisis in human affairs.

Washington and Lincoln are shining examples of this overruling wisdom, sometimes, to the surprise of a nation, deciding the choice of erring men. And in our life, if loyal to him, we shall see God's guiding hand as distinctly as did Samuel and David, leading us through all earth's discipline to the splendors of the eternal throne !



## CHAPTER II.

### A PRINCELY HARPER, AND A HERO.



HERE came a new surprise to the sheep pasture and home of Jesse.

See those men hastening across the fields near Bethlehem towards the flocks among which David is harping or musing alone! They arrest now the eye of the startled shepherd, and he rises to meet the strangers. They wear the uniform of the king's servants, and surprise the shepherd with the royal summons to the palace. Forsaken of God, and tortured with remorse and fears, Saul was advised to try the soothing influence of David's music. His wretched condition resembled that of the demoniacs of the New Testament, whom Christ alone could cure of their terrible malady.

The next scene is in the dwelling of Jesse. The good man's consent to part with the lad



was sought and obtained. According to custom, he gave David a present for Saul. It was a plain gift, in keeping with the rural pursuits of the family — bread, a bottle of wine, and a kid. The youthful visitor and his present were received at Gibeah with grateful condescension, and a message sent to Jesse that he must allow his son to remain in the palace.

Saul made David his armor-bearer, as a mark of delight in his music and admiring interest in his lovely character. When, or why, he left the king we are not informed. The immediate occasion for his genius may have disappeared in the more cheerful moods of Saul and the occupation of his thoughts with new and pressing cares of his kingdom.

David, we cannot doubt, gladly retired from the excitements and burdensome display of royalty to his peaceful home in Bethlehem and the greeting of his bleating flocks. What a contrast between the monarch on his throne and the shepherd on the hill-slope! One had grieved from his heart the Spirit of God, and was hastening to his doom; the other was "growing in grace," the favorite of the Most



High ! David knew not the way of the Lord with him then, who was wisely and wonderfully educating him for his resplendent future. The shepherd had new themes for thought in his solitary hours. He had seen the mysteries of royalty, its temptations and responsibilities. More than this, if possible, he had an opportunity to study the character of Israel's first king, soon to be his greatest enemy and bitter persecutor. With the glory of a throne as it is seen by the people, and its shadow thrown back upon personal and private life, haunting his thought, he sat down upon the highlands of Bethlehem to meditate, pray, and sing to the tones of his harp, until God should call him anew to public duties and their trials of his faith.

But there are exciting interludes to the tranquil life of the shepherd. The sun has sunk below the horizon, and the glowing eye of the solitary youth is watching the deepening shadows that fall upon the fine panorama of natural scenery spreading away to the rim of fading light. His reverie is broken by the appearance of a dark and frightful form from the Red Sea's wilderness.



A bear, fierce with hunger, springs upon his flock. The young shepherd, lifting to God his prayer for help, rushes to the rescue; and lo! in a moment the wild beast lies slain at his feet.

Then, again, his solitary music and meditations are interrupted by a more desperate encounter. A lion steals from his lair upon the unoffending charge; and nerved by the same might of God which gave him an easy victory over the bear, David puts his hand into the mane of this nobler foe, and wrenching him from the bleeding lamb, adds another victim to the trophies of his heroic trust in the Lord. What a striking illustration are these scenes of the Great Shepherd's care of his sheep, of whom he has said, "And none shall be able to pluck them out of my hands." Blessed indeed are they, and too glorious for human thought their eternal fold, whose walls are jasper and its gates pearl!

David did not then fully learn the lesson for himself which the "God of Jacob" was imparting, of conquering power that would soon make him the victor over a mighty and boastful enemy of his "chosen people."



There never was a really great, strong, and holy soul, without much reflection and prayer. Resolutions to be, and do, good, without such culture of the Holy Spirit, will pass away before the hot glare of the world's day, like the "morning cloud and the early dew."

While the Bethlehemite was communing with God and nature — bending over his harp with the rapture of a loving spirit — there was around his solitude the mustering of hostile forces for combat.

The army of the Philistines, an ancient tribe of pagans which gave the name *Palestine* to the country, encamped a few miles north-west of the site of Jerusalem. Saul's troops lay along the mountain range overlooking the valley of Elah, near Bethlehem. The opposing battalions were thus in full view of each other. Among the white tents upon the confronting slopes there were preparations for a great and decisive conflict. The awful suspense which always precedes the "clash of arms" spread through the camps and hung over the green field of coming strife. War-scenes were then quite unlike those of modern



battle. No grim ordnance frowned upon the encircling heights, nor musket or rifle hail was poured among living men. The "glittering spear," the sword, and the simple sling were the principal weapons of death.

While these armies were watching each other, and expecting soon to move down into the arena of deadly conflict, a strange spectacle attracted the eager gaze of the Hebrew battalions. From the Philistines' camp came forth a solitary and gigantic warrior attended by his armor-bearer, carrying before him his shield. He was more than nine feet in height, and of corresponding size and strength. Upon his brow shone a huge helmet of brass; upon the rest of his body was clasped a coat of mail weighing one hundred and fifty-six pounds, with greaves of brass, or brazen covering for the legs, and a target of the same metal between his shoulders. His spear-point weighed eighteen pounds. It is not strange that when he strode forth from the camp towards the Hebrew lines, that he inspired terror. There were no shot or shell to crush in that armor, and his immense spear, "like a weaver's beam," would make havoc with a host of common men.



The thousands of Israel are set in battle-array; and behind their proud champion lie the ranks of the pagan foe. For a brief time ominous silence reigns, broken only by the echo of Goliath's haughty step. When fairly out upon the open field of expected battle, the mighty man breaks the stillness with a loud, defiant challenge, ringing along the wild declivities, and sending a fresh alarm throughout the army of Saul. Listen to the words that fall from his lips and echo from hill and valley to the peaceful sky — an insult to the King of kings: "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants; but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. I defy," he tauntingly added, "the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together."

The challenge was repeated, morning and evening, *forty days*; while frequent skirmishes were taking place between small detachments



of the rival armies. Jesse, now an old man, and unable to visit the camp of Saul, felt anxious to hear from his three elder sons, who were in the Hebrew army. He called David from his flocks, and told him to go with an epha of parched corn and ten loaves of bread for his brethren, and a present of ten cheeses for the commander of the thousand to which they belonged. The epha was equal to three pecks and three pints, and the cheeses were slices of coagulated milk, which had been strained, and after it had grown hard, cut in pieces. "Look," said he, "how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge" — that is, some token of their welfare, which had previously been agreed upon, and which David was to bring back to Jesse.

David was on his way the next morning at an early hour. He arrived at the camp of the Israelites just as their hosts, going forth to meet the enemy, rent the air with their loud shouts. The Philistines, in battle line, were preparing to descend the mountain. Leaving the extra ration which he had brought for his brothers in the care of the proper officer, he hastened forward into the midst of the army,



found his brothers, told his errand, and exchanged with them friendly salutations. While talking with them, Goliath advanced before the army of the Philistines repeating his blasphemous challenge so loud that it reached the ears of David. "Have ye seen," said one to another, "this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up; and it shall be that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."

To be sure that he understood them, and that what they said was not the mere result of the alarm which they felt, David proposed the inquiry to several who were near him, "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel?" adding, with a modest, though pious, intrepidity of soul, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

There was a man near by who knew well the spirit of the indignant youth; it was Eliab, the eldest brother of David. Even in the retired vale of Bethlehem the occasions



had not been wanting to show that the youngest son of the family had a measure of courage and strength which bordered on the miraculous.

His brother's jealousy, dating back to Samuel's mysterious visit to Bethlehem, and his chagrin at his own cowardice, was expressed in passionate language: "Why camest thou hither, and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

The reply of David was manly, decided, and respectful.

"What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" What, indeed, had he done to call forth this reproachful language?

Some one informed Saul of David's heroic bearing and speech. The king sent for him, and, with astonishment, listened to his calm words of cheer: "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

How unassuming the simple, yet resolute, declaration! And such always is the expres-



sion of true valor; fearless and modest, beautifully and sublimely so, when God is the "strength and portion of the soul."

The shepherd proceeds with a grandly simple but convincing argument in his own behalf:—

"Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

"Go," he exclaimed, "and the Lord be with thee." Saul's admiration was awakened, while his fears made him quite willing to test this devout intrepidity.

He then ordered his attendants to put his own armor upon David; the heavy helmet of brass upon his head, and the coat of mail



on his body. He also girded on the sword of Saul.

The youthful champion of Israel started for the field, but soon came back to Saul, and declared he could not wear the monarch's defensive suit. He had not tried it, nor was he accustomed to the use of the sword. Handing the entire equipment back to the king's officers, he took his staff in hand and departed for the battle-field. The only weapon he carried was his sling. Many of the ancients were very skilful in the use of it. We read of terrible havoc made with slings in war; of shields and armor penetrated by the smooth stones which were hurled with force nearly equal to that of a rifle-ball. David went to a brook, and to be sure of enough for the fight, took five pebbles, laid them in his shepherd's bag, and, with his sling dangling carelessly from his hand, hastened forward to meet Goliath. The champion arrogantly strode into the arena; and when near enough to see the young face blooming with health, and the comparatively slender form, indignation and scorn flashed in his eye, and burned on his lips: "And the Philistine



said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods." After this paroxysm of rage, he fixed his gaze upon the shepherd, and, with a lofty disdain, accepted his offer to contend for the victory: "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field."

The haughty threat stirred the brave heart of loyalty to God, and David addressed the champion in a strain of true and modest eloquence:

"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."



What lofty courage and humble faith! It has the sublime and holy fearlessness of Paul's triumph over spiritual foes when he says, "I have fought a good fight."

The bold speech rang out upon the soft air of Palestine, and floated to the listening ears of thousands.

It was too much for Goliath; his wrath was in a flame, and he moved with haste towards David. The son of Jesse did not wait for his approach; he would have the armies looking silently on know that he was ready to meet his foe — glad to try Jehovah's might against a heathen giant. They behold him *running* towards Goliath, sling in hand! What amazement spread along the lines of embattled enemies, mingled with pity for the audacious boy!

When within sling-range of his foe, he took from his bag a stone, placed it in the sling, and, in another moment, it went whizzing through the air, straight towards the forehead of the Philistine, sinking into his brain. A sudden dizziness seized that wounded brain; a dimness crept over his just now passion-lighted eyes; and then, reeling convulsively,



he fell, like an oak uprooted by a blast, upon the plain. David sprang upon the prostrate body, with both hands laid hold of the heavy sword by its side, drew the blade from the scabbard, and cut off the champion's head.

The Philistines saw that the day was lost, and beat a hasty retreat. With a shout of exultation echoing along the summits, the Hebrews pursued the flying host, until by treading upon each other, and continued slaughter, the rout was complete.

The victors returned, rejoicing as if *they* had won the splendid triumph. There is a great, rich, spiritual truth concealed in this encounter.

We call the sling of the young conqueror *faith*, in which was laid the symbol of God's power, whose hiding is in the smallest thing he has made. The swift motion, which hurled the pebble to the giant's forehead, is the symbol of prayer, "which moves the hand that moves the world." This power, in answer to prayer, went from Jesus to the withered hand, and clothed it with strength and beauty again.

We have a sleepless foe unceasingly defying the God of Israel, and we can only con-





Slaying Goliath. Page 34.







quer with faith that makes a single promise, or a passage of God's word, fitted to our case, winged with prayer, "sharper than any two-edged sword."

David bore the head of Goliath to Jerusalem, having laid the armor in the tent of the dead combatant. Why this trophy was taken to Jerusalem, we have no account; for the city was then in possession of the Jebusites, who were pagans. But, according to Chronicles xxix. 29, the history of David was written by Gad, Samuel, and Nathan; and there may be unaccountable statements, while there is, after all, as in the story of Jesus written by the four evangelists, perfect harmony in the general narrative.

The gory relic was kept as evidence of his claim to the promised reward for slaying the dreaded warrior of Gath.

Saul asked his chieftain, Abner, who the successful champion was; but he could not tell. The king directed that officer to make inquiry. Abner met David with his hand buried in the knotted locks of the giant's head, and took him to Saul. The monarch asked him of his origin. The reply was in



keeping with the unostentatious and transparently honest character of David: "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

We think of reasons why Saul should not have recognized David, and yet there will always remain a mystery around this singular forgetfulness.

The shepherd of Bethlehem may have been changed very much by the lapse of time since he was in the royal palace; and the king had passed through deep and dark experiences, and exciting scenes, which doubtless effaced many impressions of former years. The playing of a shepherd boy on his harp for a few days, or weeks, or even months, would not be likely to make a very strong impression on his mind. Still, the incident is another instance of silence in revelation when an explanation would gratify our human curiosity.

There was a deeply-interested listener to the conversation between Saul and David — a young man of kindred soul with the Bethlehemite — Jonathan, the king's son. Whether he recollected the previous visit to the royal abode we have no intimation. And it is difficult to account for the remarkable refine-



ment and magnanimity of nature in the heir-apparent to the crown, whose father was so demoniac in character. There must have been something good in the mother—an amiable and sensitive spirit, which impressed itself on her boy.

History does not record a finer example of unselfish friendship than that which glowed in the breast of Jonathan, while he looked upon the conqueror and heard his gentle yet courageous words. His “soul was knit with the soul of David.”

The same day Saul assigned to David a place in the royal household, and told him he must not return again to his humble home. This honorable position awakened no envy in the breast of Jonathan—no fear of a rival. His heart bounded with delight to know that the being he loved “as his own soul” was to be near him. To have the bond of attachment strong as any act on their part could make it, he proposed to enter into a formal covenant of affection and fidelity, lending to their friendship the sanctions and seal of religion. Then Jonathan took off his princely robes, and put them on David; girded him



with his sword, and handed him his belt, bow, and quiver. Saul gave to David the command of his men of war. The shepherd was thus raised at once to the highest distinction in the palace, attracting the admiring wonder of all the monarch's retinue.

Not long after, David was returning from a military expedition against the Philistines; and the women in the towns along the way came out to give him an ovation worthy of his gallantry, singing and playing on instruments in responsive chants: "Saul has slain thousands!" to which the loud and melodious answer was, "And David his ten thousands!"

This imposing display, and greater praise bestowed on David than was rendered to him, enraged the king, who saw the prospect of a successor in his former favorite — a change of dynasty to the family of Jesse. Saul determined to slay the Bethlehemite. The very next day "the evil spirit came upon him," and he "prophesied in the midst of his house." Whether he affected sacrilegiously to be a seer, or bitter predictions of his own approaching doom were extorted from him, it is impossible to know. That his state of



mind was fearfully bad is evident from the fact of David's presence with his harp to quiet his turbulent soul. The princely harper swept the strings in vain; the king's brow darkened with every new burst of melody, until his wrath flashed forth like the bolt from the cloud, sending the javelin from his hand towards the heart of the minstrel. God turned the shining barb aside, and David fled from the face of the king. The next expression of hate was relieving him from his command, and appointing him captain over a thousand men.

Without complaint, or change of manly deportment, he adapted himself to his new position, and retained the affectionate interest of the people. Saul did not like to murder his victim; but *die* he must, was the decree of a tyrant. To secure its fulfilment he promised his daughter Merab in marriage, if he would play the hero well; in other words, expose himself to the enemy.

David won his promised bride, but Saul broke his pledge; probably to provoke him to do or say something rash, that would disgrace him, and make summary punishment justi-



fiable. Learning that another daughter, Michal, loved David, the king proposed that his hated captain should slay a hundred of the hostile Philistines, and marry Michal for the reward of his gallantry. With his band he made a raid into the country of the enemy, and killed two hundred men.

Saul began to discern the sublime secret of David's success. "*God was with him*" — the key-note of all true achievement, and the assurance of a coronation on the judgment-day!

With the ripening character and rising fame of David deepened the conspiracy of Saul against his life. He threw off all concealment of his purpose, and commanded Jonathan and all his servants to get him out of the way. Jonathan reported the open design upon his existence, and told him to hide until morning; and meanwhile he could commune with his father, and plead for his friend's life. The advocate managed his cause well, referring eloquently to David's deliverance of Israel, and the guilt of shedding innocent blood. The monarch relented, and the Beth-



lehemite returned to the royal household again.

After more victories under the heroic command of David, he sat one day with his harp, sweeping its strings with his wonted power, filling all the palace with its subduing harmonies, when suddenly the *whir* of the flying javelin fell on his ear; and in another instant the weapon pierced the wall, and hung there, while David escaped.

Saul sent messengers after him, who followed him to his own home, to watch for his appearance in the morning, and kill him. Michal apprised her husband of the peril, let him down by a cord from the window, and put an effigy in the bed where he had lain. When the assassins inquired for David, Michal said he was sick; and when the cruel tyrant commanded them to kill him, lo! there was only an image.

Saul vented his anger upon Michal; but she again resorted to falsehood, pretending that he threatened her life unless she would assist him in his flight. The thwarted king was compelled to nurse his impotent revenge.



To such a condition of misanthropic gloom, satanic ambition, and murderous rage, had the God-forsaken monarch come — and he the first sovereign of the “chosen people.”

What, indeed, is man of any age in life, or position, when the Lord has said, “Joined to his idols, let him alone.”

And no child, who trifles with the Holy Spirit’s gentle calls, and hardens his heart, can tell when God may see it necessary to depart forever from the resisting soul.

“ There is a time, we know not when,  
     A point, we know not where,  
 That marks the destiny of men  
     To glory or despair.

“ There is a line, by us unseen,  
     That crosses every path —  
 The hidden boundary between  
     God’s mercy and his wrath.”



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE FUGITIVE AND EXILE.



AFTER the scene of royal passion at Gilgal, and David's flight, he next appears at Ramah. How beautiful the contrast between the palace he left and the refuge to which he was welcomed!

In the little hamlet of Naioth, nestling on that upland, lived the gifted and noble Samuel, amid the shadows of a tranquil old age. Around him were gathered a company of seers, living in their humble abodes, and receiving the last instruction of his lips.

The morning light kindling upon the summits, and the farewell smile of day lingering there, were symbols of the heavenly glory which, invisibly to mortal eyes, gave a sacred peace and beauty to that "school of the prophets."



David had not forgotten the anointing at Bethlehem, and knew well the holy character and wisdom of the patriarchal hermit to whom he directed his steps. Both naturally thought there was left in the king's heart sufficient reverence for the sacred seclusion, to prevent a hostile intrusion upon the hallowed retreat of God's servants. But the desperate Saul, having learned where David was, sent officers to seize and bring him to Gilgal.

These messengers of the king hastened towards Naioth, and were met by the Spirit of the Lord, as was Balaam when bribed to curse Israel, and suddenly became, for the time, themselves prophets. They were thus mysteriously restrained from securing the object of their search.

When the tidings of the startling rebuke reached Saul, his proud and deluded heart was the more exasperated, and he commissioned others to go and take captive the son of Jesse. They in turn came under the divine influence, and joined the seers. Then the haughty, passionate monarch determined to be himself the avenger of his fancied wrongs.



As he came near to Ramah, he stopped at a great well in Sechor, which brought people together to draw water, and inquired where Samuel and David were. Hearing that they were at Naioth, he hastened towards that place. While on his way "the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied," uttering supplications to the Lord, with sacred songs, and possibly some predictions of the future, "until he came to Naioth in Ramah." There he laid aside his robes and external garments, and continued, under a divine influence, in the exercises peculiar to the prophets, all that day and at night, in Samuel's presence. It was a strange scene—the warlike Saul at Naioth, a companion of Samuel and his pupils. The surprise that everywhere attended the report of the king's new experience called forth the exclamation which became a proverb in Israel: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

This providential defeat of the royal persecutor was followed by a truce in his sanguinary work. It was improved by David for his own safety. Fleeing from Naioth, he



directed his steps to Gibeah to meet his devoted friend Jonathan.

The grieving fugitive made an indignant appeal to the king's son: "What have I done? what is my iniquity? what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" Jonathan, unwilling to believe that his father was still conspiring against David, could only answer, "It is not so."

But the persecuted exile had bitterly learned the relentless hate of the monarch, and assured his noble friend that their mutual attachment made his father conceal from him the dark designs of evil; adding, with the terrible earnestness of appalling fear, "Truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

Jonathan was alarmed, and with unselfish fidelity immediately placed himself at David's disposal, saying, "Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee."

The "new moon" was a sacred festival, celebrated upon the monthly return of the silver crescent in the sky, and appointed to guard the people against the heathen worship of the "Queen of Night." The day after the inter-



view of David with Jonathan, this feast occurred, and both of the young princes were expected to be among the guests at the palace.

But David resolved to hide himself in a secluded spot not far from the banqueting-hall, and wait there until Jonathan brought tidings of the effect of his absence upon Saul. If, when the tyrant missed his harper, and was told that Jesse's son had gone home to attend the yearly sacrifice offered at that time, he calmly replied, "It is well," then it would be safe to venture again into the king's presence. Should his rage be excited, David must seek a more remote and secure retreat. How he could learn the result, was the anxious inquiry. Jonathan's genius and love had found an answer.

He simply replied to the questioning of his agitated companion, "Come, let us go into the field." The two friends walked away to the solitary plain, where no ear or eye but Jehovah's would hear or see their communing together. They sadly talked of the king's unreasonable enmity, and gave expression to their mutual love, beneath the open sky,



whose serenity and glory seemed a mockery of their lonely and bitter sorrow.

Jonathan, with expressions of the deepest sincerity and devotion, promised David to convey to him his father's mood and purpose, demanding in return — when his friend, according to the Lord's design, ascended the throne — a kind and honorable remembrance of himself and family. The covenant of affection and fidelity was ratified in the most solemn manner. Jonathan was now ready to disclose his plan of protection to David. The fugitive was to hide himself upon his return from Bethlehem the third day, near a stone, then, doubtless, named *Ezel*, which means, *that showeth the way*.

The signal of Saul's feelings and purpose was to be Jonathan's pastime in archery. With his attendant he would repair to the field, at the appointed time, and shoot his arrows past the rock. If, when the young man ran to pick them up, Jonathan said, "Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee," David would have nothing to fear, but might boldly show himself, and return to the palace. But if the archer told the attendant that the



arrows were beyond him, then his friend must hasten away to a safer distance from the king's wrath.

The next day David's place at Saul's table was vacant. Jonathan, and Abner the general of the armies, were there, and the son of Jesse alone absent. The hours of festive entertainment passed on, and no word of surprise, even, escaped the lips of the monarch. He was silently nursing his hatred for the moment of David's appearance.

The morning came, and the feast was renewed, with the same missing guest. Saul began to suspect some plan of escape, and angrily inquired, "Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat neither to-day nor yesterday?"

Jonathan calmly told him that David had gone to Bethlehem to attend the family sacrifice, having asked permission of him, that he might visit the dear old homestead once more. The tyrant's anger burst forth with volcanic fury. He abused his son, then cursed David; commanding the former to bring his friend there and let him be slain on the spot. Jonathan's plea for the fugitive was similar to



that which Pilate interposed in behalf of "David's greater Son" when arraigned before the Roman governor: "What hath he done?" The effect was the same in both cases; the appeal on the ground of innocence only inflamed the more the persecuting spirit. Saul hurled the javelin in his hand, intended for David, at Jonathan's form. The grieved and indignant prince arose, and leaving the royal presence, was seen no more that day at the feast. A night of prayerful anxiety must have followed the hours of sorrowful fasting, and he hailed the light which was to shine upon the field wherein was David's hiding-place.

Repairing to the spot, he drew his bow, and away sped the arrow beyond, the youth running to bring the barbed messenger of death, now made the herald-token of life. The archer shouted, "Is not the arrow beyond thee? Make speed, haste, stay not." Sending the faithful servant homeward, and seeing no sign of human observation, he went to his idolized friend.

Then followed a scene unsurpassed in tenderness and self-forgetful devotion in the annals of human affection. David must become









Jonathan and David. Page 51



an exile from all he loved in nature and national blessings ; Jonathan must bid him farewell, possibly never to see his face again, while the frown of an angry father would fling its shadow, instead, continually upon his path. David reverently bowed three times before the heir-apparent to the throne, and then the two fell upon each other's neck, in the embrace of unutterable love and grief. They wept until David's gush of feeling exceeded in overpowering intensity that of his friend. Stricken, noble, manly hearts ! There was no affectation, no complimenting, no deception. It was love's purest devotion, with no witnesses but God, the bending heavens above, and quiet nature around them. No last accents of David's adieu are recorded ; doubtless he turned away with voiceless sorrow, whose falling tears were more eloquent than speech could have been.

Jonathan's tremulous words of farewell, falling upon the solitude as David went from his side, were, "Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn, both of us, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my



seed and thy seed, forever." We can, in fancy, see him watching the receding form of David until it disappeared from his tearful vision. Turning away, he hastens to Gibeah, while his friend flees to Nob, a city eight or ten miles distant, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. The tabernacle, it seems, had been taken there from Shiloh, and there was also Ahimelech, the high-priest, who, David justly thought, might afford protection.

The strange appearance of the visitor, not only unattended, but undoubtedly with an unusual expression of countenance created by the heart-breaking experiences through which he had just passed, startled the high-priest, and he anxiously inquired why he came thus to him. David's fears of discovery in turn being awakened, his troubled heart was tempted to deceive Ahimelech — an act distrustful towards God, and cowardly in himself. Still, the views of the age were loose in regard to this resort to falsehood for self-protection; and we know that in national conflicts the wisest and best commanders never hesitate to mislead and betray the enemy. While, there-



fore, there is no excuse for falsehood, and God requires truthfulness, there are times when the exact line of right is not easily discerned, and the conscience readily made to approve what the divine judgment condemns. David told the priest that he was sent by the king on secret business, requiring him to leave his retinue behind, awaiting his orders. He asked for five loaves of bread for them. There was only the show-bread, which, after lying on the golden table a week, was given to the priests. The ceremonial purity which David claimed for himself and attendants, and the extraordinary emergency, removed the scruples of the priest, and the bread was delivered to the hungry man.

Christ, in his rebuke of the Pharisees, who found fault with him and his disciples for plucking corn to eat on the Sabbath, referred to this scene as a like compliance with the spirit, if not the letter, of the divine law.

David had scarcely time to congratulate himself upon his prospect of safety before he saw at the tabernacle Doeg, the chief of Saul's herdsmen. This principal keeper of the



king's cattle and flocks was an Edomite, professing faith in the God of the Hebrews, and paying vows in the place of his worship. The sight of this hypocrite decided David to lose no time in getting out of Nob. But he determined to go armed, not knowing but that the Edomite himself would fall upon him by the way. He asked Ahimelech for a sword, and was told there was none excepting Goliath's, kept as a relic. David replied, "There is none like that; give it to me." The very triumph it suggested nerved his arm for further combat, if compelled to defend his life. With the priest's message from the Lord, the son of Jesse hastened to Gath, in the country of the Philistines, of which Achish was king. It is strange that he should go there; but, it may be, he was directed of the Lord to do so; if not, he was in desperate circumstances, and resolved to trust the generosity of national foes rather than stay within Saul's dominions. Here again he was at once in trouble, being reported to the king as the slayer of their champion years before, and a dangerous dweller in Gath.



David now resorted to a new stratagem to escape the expected displeasure of Achish. He feigned madness, and strolled like an idiot about the town, until the king regarded him as a harmless lunatic. The stranger improved the opportunity to flee again, seeking a solitary cave near Adullam, a city of Judah, not far from Jerusalem.

How wonderful the contrasts in this brief story of flight and exile! In the mutual love and interviews of David and Jonathan there were touching and sublime displays of noblest gifts and character. The preciousness of true friendship on earth, and, above all other ties, of Christian affection, uniting to the Almighty Father and Savior, is vividly seen. The weakness of the highest in rank and moral excellence is equally apparent. David stoops to deception in his fears at Nob, and feigns grovelling insanity among the pagans he once defied in the person of Goliath of Gath.

In all this experience he was learning wisdom—his frailty and dependence on God, which later appeared, as we shall find in his poetry, in some of his finest strains of psal-



mody. How weak are we in the conflicts with evil passions and desires without the grace of God ! No one can secure the eternal crown of glory in his own strength, nor yet without an effort as earnest and constant as if he alone could win and wear it.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CHIEFTAIN AND HIS ACHIEVEMENTS.



DAVID was now in a "stronghold," or cavern, which could be defended by a small band against a much superior force, and not far from his native hills. His seclusion was soon known to the family of Jesse. They must have cherished the assurance, which the anointing of the young shepherd by Samuel gave them, of his kingly destiny; and they determined to unite their fortunes with his own, in the apparently hopeless struggle against the persecuting enmity of Saul.

Not only so, but they must have feared the vengeance of the monarch on David's account, with whom they would be safer than in their unguarded home at Bethlehem. We know the abandonment of the ancient homestead, the familiar fields and flocks, was a sad one,



when the family caravan marched towards the valley of Judah.

There was, however, a compensating joy, when the household met entire in the solitary cave, and talked over their history during the period of separation.

David felt then what he afterwards sung, —  
“Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

That cavern-scene, by the very contrast in its earthly anxieties and surroundings, reminds us of the beautiful words of the great and excellent expounder of the Bible, Albert Barnes, upon family reunions in heaven, where the “wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

“A whole family in heaven! Who can picture or describe the everlasting joy? Nor father, nor mother, nor son, nor daughter are away. In the world below they were united in faith, and love, and peace, and joy. In the morning of the resurrection they ascended together. Before the throne they bow together in united adoration. On the banks of the River of Life they walk hand in hand, and, as a family, have commenced a career of



glory which shall be everlasting. There is hereafter to be no separation in that family. No one is to lie down upon a bed of pain; no one to languish in the arms of death. Never in heaven is that family to move along in the slow procession, clad in the habiliments of woe, to consign one of its members to the tomb. God grant that, in His infinite mercy, every family may be thus united."

The family of Jesse were not long alone in the stronghold. Others, who were disaffected towards Saul, and discontented, sought admission to the company, until four hundred men, with their wives and children, had gathered in the cave, — a clan of which David was the noble chieftain.

He ruled the little kingdom well, enforcing perfect order and discipline. The whole nation of Israel now seemed to be excited by the hostility of the king towards the exile from his court. Leading men of the Gadites from beyond Jordan, famous for their prowess, offered David their services. From the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, also, accessions were made to the enemies of Saul. David could hardly believe the sight, and expressed his



fears of treachery ; but Amasai, the principal captain of the fresh recruits, turned prophet, by a sudden influence from above, and assuring him that they were his servants, pronounced upon him the blessing and peace of God.

A fine illustration of the bravery of his captains soon occurred. He longed to taste of the water he drank from earliest childhood in Bethlehem. This desire he had not concealed ; and three of his brave commanders determined to reach the cherished well, although the troops of the Philistines surrounded and held the town. Leaving the stronghold, they safely passed the lines of the enemy, went to the gate of Bethlehem, drew a supply from the cool depths of the living fountain, and returned to the cave.

The heroic deed was attended with so much danger, that David refused to taste the crystal waters of dear old Bethlehem. He poured the offering of valor on the ground, with an appeal to God as the witness of this self-denial, which was demanded by the price of blood ; for, to obtain the coveted luxury, the daring heroes had perilled their lives. The



act displayed true greatness of character — an unselfish regard for his captains, and a just appreciation of the value of life compared with a momentary gratification. How much more should we, in the clearer light of the gospel, surrender cheerfully worldly pleasures or honors, for the sake of usefulness and duty, Christ and heaven! O, too many called Christian people not only peril the eternal life of souls, but destroy it, rather than give up the wine cup, or some other sensual gratification, entirely inconsistent with a holy example.

The stern and dangerous aspect of affairs in the cave of Adullam awakened the fears of David for the safety of his loved and revered parents. He asked the king of Moab to give them a refuge in Mizpeh, the capital of the nation. The request was promptly granted, owing, doubtless, to the tyrant's hostility to the reigning sovereign of Israel. The dutiful son appeared in all David's conduct towards his parents; no instance of neglect or disrespect is recorded. The true-hearted *brother* was no less apparent in keeping the flocks, while the rest of Jesse's sons were in the



battle-ranks, and then hastening, at the father's command, to the plains of conflict, to carry them food.

How delightful is such family affection, whose expression is the fulfilment of God's benevolent design in creating it—the highest well-being and happiness of home, and through it of the world! No sins are more pointedly condemned in the Bible, and have proved more fatal to worldly success, than those of unfaithfulness in parents to their trust, and the disobedience of children. The home was the first gift of God to the newly-fashioned world; and he will bless no one sheltered by it, who strikes at its very existence by either perverting or scorning its divinely-appointed authority.

Scarcely were Jesse and his wife safely in Mizpeh before a prophet sought David's fastness, and bade him leave it for another solitude. He immediately led his men to the forest of Hareth. The providential reason for this change was probably the exposed condition of a town near that wilderness, which the presence of his forces would protect. Saul heard of the movement, and, from the



heights of Gibeah, hoped to descend like a vulture upon his prey, on David.

To insure success, he called for a display of loyalty to him, complaining of indifference, if not treachery, among his subjects. Doeg, the Edomite, heard the bitter words, and stepped forth the willing servant of Saul in his revengeful plotting. To inflame the king's hate, he told the monarch of the scene at Nob, where David was helped in his flight by Ahimelech, the high-priest, omitting to mention the declaration of the fugitive, that he was there on the *king's business*. This was enough to kindle the consuming fire of vengeance. Sending for Ahimelech, he charged upon him the crime of treachery, which the man of God denied, vindicating both himself and David from the charge. Saul's evil passions were only stimulated by the just and gentle appeal. A bad temper is always made worse by truth and justice, because the consciousness of wrong is increased by the contrast, and the malign spirit exasperated.

One of those terrible tragedies, which have a bloody and awful preëminence in human



history, followed—the resistless and sanguinary work of a despotic will in its wrathful mood. Saul shouted for an executioner of his demoniac decree; but there was a pause of amazement, which was soon broken by the appearance of Doeg, at Saul's command, on the arena of martyrdom, glad to shed the innocent blood. Eighty-five priests of the Lord, whom the tyrant declared to be in sympathy with David, sank under the sword of the Edomite. Their bleeding bodies at the feet of Saul only sharpened his appetite for blood. He despatched his murderers to destroy the inhabitants of Nob, the city of the priests, with the order not to spare the children or the aged. All fell before the glittering and dripping blades wielded by the assassins. What a solemn and dangerous trust is power! and how few have failed to abuse it! It is coveted by nearly all men, and yet none will be required in the final judgment to reckon more strictly with the Judge than those who possessed it, whether acquired by office or wealth, or genius and culture.

Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech, escaped the massacre, and fled to the wilderness of Hareth,



casting himself upon the mercy of David, who not only received him cordially, pledging his protection, but mourned deeply over the fearful sacrifice he had undesignedly occasioned. He had now the priestly oracles of God with him.

A military adventure not long after followed. Keilah, a town of Judah, was besieged by the Philistines, and David's heroic nature was stirred. He resolved, if God favored the design, to rescue the city. Abiathar sought the heavenly guidance, and told David to go against the enemy with his six hundred men, and conquer. His brave hand hesitated lest the attack should prove a rash and disastrous one. Reassured by the prophet's message, they followed their intrepid leader to a glorious victory, and Keilah was saved.

The victors naturally supposed the gallant raid would soften the heart of the monarch thus aided by the chief whose life he had longed to take. But the effect was exactly the opposite, so fiendish had his God-forsaken soul become. David therefore hastened



from Keilah, while his sovereign plotted anew his death.

A bright and memorable oasis now cheered the desert-life of Jesse's son: it was a visit from Jonathan, who had learned his place of refuge. The meeting was full of love's joy and encouragement. Jonathan again expressed his confidence in the divine appointment of David to the throne of Israel, content himself to "be next unto him." The friends separated after a repetition of their covenant; David to find treachery lurking near him, in contrast with the unequalled fidelity of the king's heir.

The Ziphites, into whose wild country David went from Keilah, lying between Hebron and the Dead Sea, sent word by messengers to Saul in Gibeah, that they knew where the object of his enmity was, and would guide the king to his hiding-place. With a blessing pronounced upon the traitors, the king commenced once more the hunt for the harper and hero. Saul and his men pursued the flying fugitive along the slope on one side of the mountains of the wilderness of Maon, in the southern part of the land of Judah, while David and his company moved rapidly along





Saul searching for David, Page 67,







the opposite declivity. The chase was at its height, when news came to the Hebrew monarch, that the Philistines were invading his realm, the tidings arresting him in his guilty pursuit. He turned backward to face a greater enemy for the moment, while David retired to the fastnesses of En-gedi. This name means *the fountain of the goat*, because no other animal could live there. The place was also called Hazazon-Tamar, which signifies *the city of palm trees*, on account of the abundance of this forest-glory of Palestine.

Saul defeated the Philistines, and returned to the search after David at the head of three thousand men. The chieftain, with only six hundred followers, had retreated to a rocky seclusion, awaiting in a cave the leadings of providence.

It happened that Saul, on his way up the mountain, lay down to rest at the mouth of this very cavern. During his slumber David and his men saw him, the latter urging the king's death. It did indeed seem to be a providential interposition for that very object. O, how forcibly the scene teaches us to be careful what *interpretation* we give to the



ways of God with us! He sometimes tries us, when a superficial view might see only a special favor.

David listened to the voice of conscience, which said, "Touch not the Lord's anointed to harm him." He obeyed with lofty decision in the face of his impatient men. There is no sublimer conquest than that of *unholy passion*. Therefore God says, "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city."

When the morning came over the mountains, and chased the shadows from the rocky defiles, Saul arose, and gazing around upon the solitude, wondered whether that dawning day would light his steps to David's ambush. Starting upon the search, he suddenly heard a familiar voice calling, "My lord the king!" The startled monarch turned towards the sound, and lo! there stood David in the cave's mouth, who immediately added, —

"Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to-day into my hand in the cave; and some bade me kill



thee; but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth my hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand; for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in my hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but my hand shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, 'Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked' — if I had been so guilty as to conspire with others against thee, I should surely have been depraved enough to kill thee when I had thee in my power — "but my hand shall not be upon thee. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea" — so insignificant a person, that he is unable to do thee any harm. "The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thy hand."

Saul's spirit was subdued for the time by



the appeal which the undeserved escape made to his heart and conscience, and the manly, noble address of David. He wept aloud, declaring truly that David was "more righteous" than he, and his deep conviction that the sceptre would pass to his hand. The softened persecutor further besought David to give his oath that he would favorably regard his family in the future years of regal power.

The king went to his palace, and David repaired to a stronghold again. And now the shadow of death passed over the land of Israel, felt in all its borders. The aged, venerable, beloved, and saintly Samuel "fell asleep." He had been a mighty and benign power in the Hebrew nation. Like all good men, his hallowed influence increased with his years, and the words, "Samuel is dead," in their transit across Palestine, stirred with sincere sorrow every heart, and gathered a great multitude to his funeral at Ramah. The grief of the king and people favored the movements of David. He improved the truce, and marched into the plains of Paran, in the desert of Arabia Petræa. A painful, and in its issue a romantic, episode in David's



career occurred. He sent to a rich man who lived at Maon, named Nabal — which means *foolish* — for supplies. The wealthy landholder verified the significance of his name by curtly refusing the request of the messengers, inquiring, "Who is David, and who is this son of Jesse?" The young men of Nabal's household told his wife, at the same time alluding to the protection David's band had afforded to them by the very presence of so strong a force in the neighborhood. She was a woman of heart, and soul, and sense, and immediately took the matter in her own hands. She ordered the asses to be laden with an abundance of food, and went forth to meet David's approaching company on the march to avenge the insult her husband had offered him. The interview when the two caravans met was worthy of both. Abigail pleaded for mercy, condemning Nabal's "churlishness," and complimenting in modest, earnest speech the future king of Israel.

Her beauty, entreaty, and generous gifts overcame the chief's indignation, and pronouncing a blessing upon the queenly wife of the "churl," he accepted the offerings, and



thanking her for the timely interposition which saved her household, went back to his encampment.

Returning to her home, Abigail found her husband in the midst of feasting and revelry, and informed him of the great occasion of her absence. The intoxicated man, stunned with the startling intelligence, was seized with a strange malady, and in ten days expired — a single illustration of what has not unfrequently occurred in the annals of a rebellious race, the judgments of God following closely upon daring acts of wickedness. We knew of a judge, who, when arrested in his career of dissipation by the Holy Spirit, resolved to be a Christian, and then stifled his convictions and returned to his sins. He lived a year, scoffing at all holy things. While "raffling," after a carousal, at the midnight hour, with his gay companions, over a horse he had named after the Savior of the world, he was seized with a fatal disease. When told he must die, he sent for the faithful minister who talked with him the year before, and said it was too late to be saved. He then called to his bedside the comrades who were with him



in his last festive scene. Looking at them, with the death-dew upon his brow, he said, "I am going to hell; I am as sure of it as of my own identity: and now take care of yourselves while you can." These were his last words. How full of tender admonition are the words, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not."

David, according to the custom of the age in matrimonial affairs, soon proposed to marry Nabal's widow, and she became his wife. It was neither unlawful nor uncommon to have more than one wife in those early ages, although clearly contrary to the original design of the sacred relation, and condemned by the gospel of Christ.

There was for months no renewal of hostilities by Saul, and David wandered about the wilderness, at length returning to the solitudes of the Ziphites, hoping, undoubtedly, that they would let him alone, since the king had ceased to persecute. But they knew the character of the monarch too well to believe him sincere in his repentance, and again sent him word that the exiled prince was within



their reach. The intelligence aroused the sleeping demon of passion in his breast, and he summoned armed men to attend him once more in the pursuit of David.

It was evening, and on the hill of Hachilah the fading twilight was resting, reflected from the white tents of Israel's king and his attendants. In the distance, unobserved, stood the son of Jesse, with a few of his faithful friends, looking upon the encampment. He had been informed of the approach of his enemy, and providentially discovered him in this evening resting-place peacefully slumbering with his general-in-chief by his side. He called for volunteers to go with him into the very camp of the foe. Abishai promptly offered to risk his life with his leader. What a scene was that for a painter! The king is asleep, and the shadows of the solitary hills deepening around and over him and his reposing company! David proposes to get among the tents, and learn exactly what force is there. The two steal along carefully, watching the effect of each footfall disturbing the deep silence, until they stand at the very pillow of the unsuspecting persecutor.



Abishai, poising his spear, begs permission to smite, saying that he only wished to give one stroke with his weapon. The faithful hero glanced at his chief, and then at the barb glittering in the starlight, waiting for the word of doom. Instead of this, a whisper falls on his ear: "Destroy him not, for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" The magnanimous exile added his conviction that God would bring the wicked sovereign to his merited death without their unauthorized blow; telling Abishai to take the king's spear and "cruse of water," by the bolster, as trophies, and hasten with him to their own stronghold.

The brave and faithful man stepped forward to the head of the slumbering king, seized his weapon and canteen, and handed them to David. The contents of the cruse spoke well for the royal example of temperance, as no allusion is made to a flask of wine; or perhaps this silence was a compliment to David, who took only the symbols of defeat to his enemy, and purity of motive in himself: he seemed to declare by the scene his ultimate



victory, and his resort alone to God's clear fountains of strength and refreshment.

God had sent on Saul and his band a "deep sleep," and no sign of waking appeared while the chieftain, with his nephew, hastened to the top of a hill not far distant, and shouted to the sleepers, addressing himself to the king's followers, at whose head was Abner. The latter started from slumber, and haughtily inquired who it was that cried after the king. There never was a finer expression of bitter irony than David's reply: "Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster."

The startled monarch knew the voice of the harper of former years in his palace, and answered back, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" The magnanimous exile confirmed his suspicions, and made a touching plea of



innocence, charging the unjust persecution upon evil counsellors, and offering his life a sacrifice to his sovereign, who was like one pursuing "a flea," or "hunting a partridge upon the mountains." Saul was subdued again, and, confessing his sin, said truly, "I have played the fool, and erred exceedingly." His superior in all things but the crown, which was yet to be worn by the prince, he requested him to send for the spear, making no allusion to the cruse of water; doubtless because the former was the sign of the unprovoked hostility of the king, and, by its return, of loyalty in the heart he would pierce. The guilty ruler, conquered thus by the goodness that spared his life, begged the fugitive to return to the palace. But David knew his foe too well, who, like Pharaoh, relented when God's providence softened his spirit, and then returned to his sins. There is nothing more awful in human life than this abandonment by God of a sinner to that domineering power of evil, which, whatever the interludes of remorseful sorrow, leaves no ground for true repentance. An aged man said, with tears, to a faithful preacher, after



an address to the young, "That is right, Dr. C. Preach to the youth; it is too late for me. I shall be lost. I can feel no more the tender desire to be a Christian I used to have. I have grieved the Holy Spirit away forever."

The forsaken king's conscience was not dead, but spoke for the right in a blessing pronounced, like that of Baalam upon Israel he was sent to curse, upon the man whose blood was eagerly sought.

How fearful to a lost soul will be *conscience and memory* — its companions forever!

Although there was a truce in the monarch's pursuit of David, the weary, desponding heir to Israel's throne seemed to doubt the reality of the anointing by the Lord's prophet, and all the signal tokens of his destiny, and declared he should "perish one day at the hand of Saul." In his alarm he determined to flee his country, and once more claim for himself, his family, and his company of adventurers, the protection of Achish, the Philistine king, at Gath. Somehow the pagan ruler and David had a singular regard for each other; for the Hebrew's confidence was



not misplaced. There may have been similar qualities of native character, creating mutual respect; or political negotiations, which, in spite of national differences, civil and religious, made Achish friendly to the wandering chief. At length, finding that his foreign guest desired to have his colony by itself, he generously offered him Ziklag for his residence. There was a considerate kindness in selecting a town which belonged to a tribe of Israel then in subjection to Achish; so that David, while living in his own land, had the protection of a powerful sovereign feared by Saul. Ziklag was first assigned to Judah, then to Simeon, and finally became the possession of the kings of Judah again.

The military prowess of David and his men now began to appear. They made a raid into the country on the southern border of Canaan, and swept the wild tribes before them, leaving a desert behind them. When the victorious chief returned, he went with the spoils to Achish, to anticipate any rumors that might go before him. When the king made inquiries concerning his incursion, he misrepresented the whole affair, to make the best possible im-



pression upon the mind of his protector — another instance of his human frailty, stooping to falsehood to advance his cause. He represented his expedition to have been within the lands of Judah, — which Achish the more readily believed because brave Benjamites, of whose tribe Saul was, had joined David, — looking very much like a conspiracy against the dominions of the Hebrew king.

The reason of this invasion is not given, nor is it possible to know how far it was justifiable in the sight of God thus to exterminate the heathen tribes. Not long after this raid near Mount Tabor, one of the memorable summits of Scripture history, lying on the north-east border of the great plain of Esdraelon, the hosts of the Philistines gathered against Saul. Achish requested David to join his army, proposing to make him captain of his life-guard.

Saul's fears were excited, and the shadow of coming disaster seemed to fall upon his gloomy spirit.

There was living at Endor, a village of Galilee, about four miles from Tabor, where Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera, a famous



sorceress. Her name is not given, but she is called "the witch of Endor." To her, instead of to a prophet, the desperate king resorted for counsel. Assuming the apparel of a common citizen, he went, with a few attendants, under cover of night, to Endor,—and he, the very man who "had put away those that had familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land."

The witch knew that the monarch had thus decreed her own death, and when the strange visitor asked her to "bring up whom he should name," she replied with alarm, "Wherefore layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?"

He gave his oath that no punishment should follow, and then desired to see Samuel. To the astonishment of the woman, before she had time to go through her incantations, the departed seer stood before her. This apparition, with the unearthly interview which followed between the three, like the marvels wrought by Pharaoh's magicians in the presence of Moses, cannot be satisfactorily explained. God has left the remarkable scene in mystery.



And here it may be fitting and well to notice the different religious teachers and wonder-working leaders in the religious services and worship of antiquity.

There were priests ; prophets or seers ; magicians, including in the name soothsayers, wizards, &c. ; and apostles.

True prophets were inspired with a clear foresight of such future events as God wished to announce. Magicians were the wise pagans of the East, who, with soothsayers, wizards and witches, apparently wrought miracles and foretold coming events. How far they were permitted to go into the region of the supernatural, to try character and visit judicial blindness upon the guilty rejecters of the "Father of lights," we have no hint in the Bible. Amid all the lying delusions of magic, there were anciently, as now, in clairvoyance and spiritualism, unexplained and startling phenomena.

But revelation, reason, and the practical results, "error, sin, and shame," all prove that these mysteries are not of God, — any further than they come from the complicated mechanism of humanity, perverted by design-



ing men, or are the permitted displays of Satanic power.

The very result of this resort to one who professed to stand in the place of the Bible and prayer, as the guide of mankind, revealed God's condemnation of all such attempts to supersede his providence and grace.

The advertisements of such pretenders to supernatural wisdom, even now enter the homes of the people in the columns of the periodical press, and their signs meet our gaze along the public streets.

The "pure in heart," the devout and humble souls, are never found in communion with these deceivers; nor can any one be guiltless who encourages them in their lying impostures.

The ghost of Samuel charged Saul's crimes upon him, and prophesied his speedy overthrow. Israel's gloomy monarch returned to his camp, while the Philistines marched from Shunem to Aphek, near Jezreel, not far from the army of the Hebrews.

There was now a sudden commotion in the pagan host; the princes or leaders under the king discovered the Israelitish ranks, and gath-



ered around Achish, asking, excitedly and indignantly, what the strange spectacle meant. They talked of treachery and defeat, and urged the sending away of the champion who slew Goliath, and also his band. Achish reluctantly complied with the wishes of his chiefs, and assured David, as he had done them, of his unshaken confidence in his integrity.

David led his men towards Ziklag, and was joined on the way back by seven of the most heroic men of the tribe of Manasseh. When he drew nigh to his city, lo ! there was only a heap of ruins. The Amalekites, his enemies, had taken advantage of his absence and sacked the city, carrying away his wives among the captives, and "much spoil," — signal revenge for his incursions into their territory.

When David, with his regiment of six hundred brave men, reached the ruined town, there was a remarkable scene. The noble leader and his troops looked upon the sacked and smouldering city a moment with the mute surprise of a sudden and terrible discovery ; then "lifted up their voices and wept aloud."



Those strong hearts were deeply moved ; not so much by the loss of property as by the captivity of their wives and children. Their loved ones were gone, and the world had no longer a *home* for them.

When the storm of grief had subsided, the bereaved followers of David turned their thoughts to the cause of their calamity. Who but their leader had excited the enmity of the Amalekites by invading their country? Revolt, and even death by stoning, stared the chief in the face. In his extremity he sought the Lord's guidance through Abiathar the priest. To the anxious questioning, "Shall I pursue" the spoilers and "overtake them?" came the answer, "Pursue ; for thou shalt overtake them ; and without fail recover all."

With this divine encouragement, the word of command to march in the track of the flying foe, was given 'by the glad leader, and the eager warriors moved forward in the chase for life's dearest treasures. Such was the haste, that, at the brook Besor, which empties near Gaza into the Mediterranean Sea, two hundred of the six hundred men were compelled



by exhaustion to stop. David with the rest hurried forward, and soon met an Amalekite's Egyptian servant, nearly famished. The poor straggler had been abandoned by his master on account of sickness. He told the story of the raid and pillage, and, demanding the promise of David not to deliver him again to his master, consented to act as guide to the camp of the invaders. What a spectacle soon greeted the vision! There was the host of the Amalekites, holding a general festival over their spoils. They were eating, and drinking, and dancing in the fading light of an Eastern day. Not long did the tired Hebrews look upon the festive pagans. David ordered an immediate attack. The men rushed, like tigers upon their prey, to the slaughter, and the ground drank blood until the next evening, and then it ceased because there were no more victims for spear or sword, — only four hundred young men mounted on camels escaping the harvest of death.

The victors recovered their wives and children, and took an immense amount of spoil. Upon their arrival at the stream where the



two hundred were left, objection was made to sharing with them the booty. This gave an occasion for the exhibition of David's true greatness of character. He decided that it was just to make an equal distribution to those weary men who remained and guarded the baggage; and afterwards it became a statute in Israel, that all honorably connected with a military campaign should receive equally in the division of the spoils.

This incident was followed by another no less complimentary to the chieftain. Upon arriving at Ziklag, he sent from the abundance of good things, presents to the people in various places who had befriended him. Some of these haunts had not been noticed in the previous account of his wanderings.

The sacred annals throughout, mention simply what it is necessary to record, in the sight of infinite wisdom. We often wish we could know more than is written, especially when we read the life of Jesus; but we are taught by this limit to our curiosity, both our narrow range of knowledge and the sovereignty of God, who "works all things after the *counsels of his own will.*"



About a week had passed since David left the army of the Philistines, when he reached Ziklag, and Saul returned from Endor to his army. The next morning revealed to the king's sad gaze the hostile ranks in motion. In a brief time the shining weapons were clashing in deadly combat. The tide of battle surged back and forth awhile, then turned decidedly in favor of the Philistines. The king and his battalions fled, while the archers singled out the illustrious fugitive for their mark. Wounded and desperate, he begged his armor-bearer to slay him, and spare him the shame of dying by the hand of the heathen conquerors. When the request was refused, he resorted to suicide, falling upon a sword. The fearful tragedy was followed by a similar self-destruction by the armor-bearer, who resolved not to survive the humiliating death of his sovereign. The monarch's sons were also killed, and their mangled bodies, with their father's corpse, taken to the temples of idolatry, grateful offerings to Dagon.

The inspired narrative gives briefly, and very impressively, the secret of the monarch's



end: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one who had a familiar spirit to inquire of it; and inquired not of the Lord; therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

Mysterious, indeed, are God's ways with men. He left Saul to verify his declaration in regard to Israel's request for a monarchy: "In my wrath I gave them a king." For there was nothing in his reign to make the people fall in love with despotic rule; nothing to make the crown desirable to another. While this general impression was produced by Saul's dark career and its fearful close, God by it was preparing a successor who should honor him, and perpetuate his church and worship among the nations.







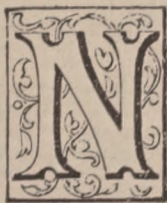
## Part Second.

### THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### DAVID ASCENDS THE THRONE.



O tidings of battle from the shadow of Mount Tabor had reached David for nearly three days.

With his warriors he was enjoying the fruits of victory amid the ruins of Ziklag, when suddenly a stranger entered the town, with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head. The rending of the robe, and throwing dust or ashes upon the head, was then, and is still, an Oriental mode of expressing great sorrow and mourning.

The unknown traveller was taken at once to David, before whom he bowed with deepest reverence. There was in this homage the



recognition of a powerful prince, whose favor the mysterious visitor sought.

David saw at a glance that he was from the plains of conflict, and eagerly inquired how the struggle had gone.

The fugitive reported Saul's defeat and death, making special mention of Jonathan's untimely fate; doubtless because he was aware of the tender friendship which had existed between him and David.

The Amalekite went farther than a simple statement of the facts, to win distinction by a falsehood respecting his own part in the sanguinary strife. With an air of proud importance he went on to say, that he found the monarch wounded, slew him, and bore away the crown from his brow, and the golden bracelet from his arm.

The evidences of Saul and Jonathan's death admitted of no doubt, and the magnanimous David was overwhelmed with the greatness of the calamity. His mourning, in which joined his faithful band, was deep as it was sincere. With the first moment of calm reflection came thought of the Amalekite's crime, according to his own declaration; and charging upon



him the guilt of killing the "Lord's anointed," David ordered one of his young men to slay him.

How this messenger obtained the royal badges is not known; probably he ran and took them when he saw Saul fall in death.

The time had come for David's decisive action for himself and the imperilled nation, in their divinely-appointed relations to each other. He inquired of the Lord if he should make an open demonstration of his royalty by repairing to one of the cities of Judah as headquarters. God revealed to him that this was the next step to be taken, and Hebron the place. This ancient town, eighteen miles south of Jerusalem, was originally called Kirjath-Arba, i. e., the city of Arba, the father of Anak; and later, Mamre, from an Amorite residing there, who was the friend of Abraham. Here the patriarchs were buried. It lies near the base of hills with fruitful lands about it. It is still a walled city, and the capital of the "hill country of Judah." On the rocky summits was an abundance of wild honey.

The chieftain and heir to the throne pro-



posed to march for this famous old town. Soon the colony was in motion, — the armed men, their wives, children, flocks and herds, forming no mean caravan, — winding along the pathways through the thinly-populated region towards Hebron. When he entered the streets of the city, the tribe of Judah welcomed him as their future sovereign, immediately and gladly gathering to his coronation.

The Philistines offered no resistance to the promotion of David, whom they had protected in his roving life on purpose to annoy and distress Saul. Through the hostility existing between the house of the dead monarch and the young prince, they expected, in return for their kindness to him, to gain rather than lose by his extending power.

David increased very greatly his material resources when he married the rich widow of Nabal; and now, upon ascending the throne, augmented his political influence by taking for a bride Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, a Geshurite, who ruled the region around the head waters of the Jordan. This king's province was one of those not subdued when



the Hebrews entered Canaan, lying on their northern border.

The ruler in Hebron was informed of the respect shown by the people of Jabesh-gilead to the bodies of Saul and Jonathan, by the rescue and honorable burial of the royal remains; thus expressing a grateful remembrance of Saul's deliverance of their town from Nabash, the king of the Ammonites, when he threatened conquest. These men of the tribe of Manasseh displayed a brilliant heroism, which made their loyalty the more conspicuous.

Selecting a dark night, the chosen band went to Bethshan, where the dead were desecrated to grace the victories of Dagon, and taking the bodies from the idol's temple, returned with the blood-stained relics of a departed dynasty. To preserve them at all, they were compelled to burn them. Over the ashes they observed a fast seven days.

David sent a special messenger to Jabesh-Gilead to thank the inhabitants for their thoughtful and noble attention to the slain, promising them a reward, and urging them to devote their valor to the new order of things



in the realm. The whole transaction is another glimpse of the superior talents, wisdom, and moral qualities of the son of Jesse, shining forth among the cruel despotisms of paganism, and the comparative ignorance and selfish passions prevalent among his own people.

• We must judge of the character of a people or of an individual, as clearly as possible, according to the divine rule of responsibility — the degree of the light enjoyed. How small the Bible, and that only in manuscript, the Hebrews possessed! They regarded all the rest of the world as outlaws — the foes of God and his people; while, necessarily, their conceptions must have been comparatively faint, both of immortality and the gospel law of love. Justice, more than mercy, was the sentiment and government of the people. The most enlightened in those early ages were in darkness, contrasted with our light, intellectual and spiritual. The accountability and final judgment must be according to the means of grace and of usefulness we have.

The youngest pupil in a Sabbath school, who is not a Christian, is older in impeni-



tence than the ancient Hebrew of ripest years. It is a very impressive thought, and gives to early life a solemn interest never dreamed of when David kept his flocks or wore a crown.

The new king did not find the throne a refuge from trouble.

A single son of Saul, named Ishbosheth, was living.

And now began the dark record of conspiracy and rebellion in Israel. For David sat on no traitor's throne. God chose and appointed him to be the successor of Saul, and he had not given occasion for persecution or reproach.

Abner, who had been commander-in-chief of Saul's army, was a splendid soldier, and the most distinguished man remaining of the former court. But he was an unprincipled, ambitious man. For he stood by his revengeful monarch to the last, and then acted without the least regard to God's revealed will or an enlightened conscience.

Abner hated David because of Saul his master's malice and fate, his own defeats before the superior generalship of the exiled



chieftain, and to crown these, the cutting rebuke which rang on his ear when David and Abishai stood on the hill-top with the captured spear and cruse of water.

This valiant and wicked man determined to employ the weak representative of departed royalty to advance his own selfish aims. He knew that Jonathan's memory was cherished by the people; and even the first monarch's heroism was not forgotten, especially by the army. The daring chief went boldly forward with his plans. At Mahanaim he secured and directed the coronation of Ishbosheth, and all the tribes but Judah proclaimed him king.

During two years Saul's son quietly enjoyed his honors in his secluded capital, while Abner was vigilantly preparing for aggressive war. At length he advanced with his troops towards the border of Judah. David was compelled to fight, by his victorious arms maintaining his right to reign.

Five years more brought no recorded changes to the king at Hebron. Six sons were born there during that period.

Meanwhile Abner took for his wife Rizpah, formerly a member of Saul's household — an



act then understood to indicate the desire and design to occupy the throne itself of her sovereign lord.

This bold move alarmed and excited Ishbosheth, who complained of it to Abner. The proud commander passionately resented the rebuke, and swore revenge, — becoming from that hour the worst enemy of the hitherto favorite prince. The king was dumb before him to whom he owed his crown.

Such is the unreliability of human friendship unsanctified by mutual love to God; in a moment it passes away before the hot breath of passion, or decays in selfish neglect. It is a precious truth sung by Fawcett, —

“Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.”

Abner immediately communicated with David, and gave him to understand that he was the power behind Ishbosheth's throne, greater than it, and was ready to negotiate for a transfer of the rival power to him. David made the first condition of a treaty, the



restoration of Michal, his first wife, the daughter of Saul, who was unjustly given by her father to another; sending at the same time messengers directly to Ishbosheth, to aid Abner in the matter. The irresolute and timid prince complied with the united demand, and took from her weeping husband Michal, who was welcomed to his palace by David.

The transaction seems strange indeed; but, as we have before noticed, our views of domestic life, and of all duties, are so much clearer, it is difficult to reconcile things allowed among the best people, then, with piety and principle.

Abner, with twenty men, escorted Michal to Hebron, where a splendid feast, in honor of the alliance, and also of respect, was made for them by the king.

But a new storm was gathering around the throne of David. Joab, his leading commander, returning from some expedition, heard of the visit of Abner, and his jealousy was kindled into a flame. To have Abner, the traitor, received into royal favor by his side, a dreaded rival, was more than he could



bear. He went to David, declaring angrily that a spy was seeking the monarch's ruin. For some reason — either by the artful management of Joab, or the king's command, to protect him if possible — messengers hurried after Abner, and brought him again to Hebron. At the city gate Joab and his brother, evidently according to arrangement, met the returning chieftain. Joab told him he had private business with him, and they went aside, when he slew him with his sword. Thus early began to appear the sanguinary conflict of passions, under the shadow of a throne, — the conspiracies and assassinations which make the annals of monarchy fearfully dark, and show us what the earth would be without the restraints of God's providence and grace continually checking and thwarting the madness of human depravity.

When the spreading news of Abner's assassination reached the ears of David, and stirred the monarch's soul with indignation and grief, in impassioned language he declared his innocence, and uttered a fearful imprecation upon the house of Joab — even the judgments of God, as the token and penalty of his crime.



His censure of Joab reminds us of Haman's humiliation, many years afterwards. The commander of David's forces was compelled to obey the general order for mourning; to rend his garments and put on sackcloth.

The funeral was the first solemn pageant of the kind under the sceptre of David. Abner's body was borne, with all the honors of royal respect, to the sepulchre. Thousands gathered to the capital to join in the great procession, whose lamentations filled the peaceful heavens. The monarch stood before the tomb and wept aloud, leading the concourse in the wail of sorrow. How finely appeared again, amid funereal gloom, the magnanimity and nobility of David's nature! No narrow ambition blinded his appreciation of genius, or led him to flatter the mean spirit of revenge in a favorite chieftain.

The brief poetical utterance over the lifeless form was a refined and cutting rebuke to Joab. Exclaimed the king, —

“Died Abner as a fool dieth?  
Thy hands were not bound,  
Nor thy feet put into fetters:  
As a man falleth before wicked men,  
So fellest thou.”



That is to say, Abner was not a manacled criminal put to death, but the victim of lawless violence, whose murder deserved to be punished. When urged by the people, who brought refreshments to him, to strengthen himself, he declined, declaring, with noble self-denial, that the sun should go down upon his fasting for Abner. He gave a reason for sparing the assassin by adding to the brief eulogy, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" the significant language, "And I am this day weak, though anointed king;" that is, his power was too recent and unsettled to make it prudent to punish summarily and deservedly the conspicuous criminal.

Still it may well be doubted whether David acted heroically in this clear case of murder. It was timid in a king thus to fear the consequences of administering justice. But such a resort to expediency, as necessary in circumstances of peculiar difficulty, is of daily occurrence everywhere. Sometimes we are compelled to defer, or let alone, what we feel would in itself be right, because, at the time, to act otherwise would be a rash and fatal



attempt to force our way against irresistible opposition.

On the other hand, we had better die vindicating truth and justice, than compromise or betray either.

The body of Abner was hardly left quietly in death's repose, and the mourning ended, before another and greater tragedy startled the king and his subjects. Two brothers, who were captains in the army of Abner, for some unknown reason, probably to conciliate David, determined to slay the trembling Ishbosheth. He was seeking rest at noonday in his apartment, when the assassins, pretending to be sent for supplies kept in the same part of the royal residence, gaining admission to his room, fell upon the bereaved sovereign, and slew him. Cutting off his head, they fled to Hebron, and presented the bloody trophy to David, reminding him that the pale brow on which a crown had rested was that of Saul's son, and his rival.

They met no smile of approval — they saw no signal of reward.

Alluding, in words of indignation and grief, to the case of the Amalekite who despoiled



Saul in death, he pronounced at once the sentence of execution upon the assassins. The fatal blows followed, and their hands and feet were cut off and hung over the Pool of Hebron, that the people might know the king's deep abhorrence of their deed. The head of his rival was honorably buried in Abner's sepulchre.

We think no prince, of any land or age, could have expressed more emphatically his high regard for justice, and shown his self-forgetful respect for an enemy deserving consideration, than did the king of Judah in this treatment of both the living and the dead. He called Ishbosheth "righteous," because he gave no provocation to the regicides who slew him, and was indeed the deluded victim of Abner's ambition, however guilty himself in yielding to the dazzling prospect of reigning in his father's stead over Israel.

The only heir to the throne of Saul, whose claims were likely to be urged, was Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son. But in the flight of terror, with him, when she heard of Ishbosheth's death, his nurse fell, made him a poor cripple, and consigned him to obscurity.




God had now, by his providence, removed the barriers before the rising power of David, without a stain upon the king's character, in the means which he permitted to be used. The son of Jesse encouraged no sanguinary measures, no secret conspiracies, in his behalf, but was loyal, honorable, God-fearing in his kingly career, from the stronghold of the wilderness to the throne at Hebron.

No words of the infinite Ruler of all men are more certain of fulfilment than these: "Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."



## CHAPTER II.

### THE CORONATION AT HEBRON, AND THE THRONE IN JERUSALEM.

HE burial of Ishbosheth turned the eyes of all the tribes of Israel towards the throne of David in Hebron. The leading men among them began to move in the acknowledgment of his right to rule over all Israel. More than eight thousand of the descendants of Aaron, and Levites, were active in the grand movement. The "rank and file" of the army began the march for the capital of Judah. The revolution was quiet and sublime. Nearly half a million of Saul's former subjects thronged Hebron and its suburbs, until the town and its environing hills and valleys were alive with the just now hostile tribes.

Then the elders went to David in behalf of



the multitude, and assured the king they recognized his relations to them in origin, heroic life, and divine appointment to the universal sovereignty of Israel, civil and military. The king knew they were right, for God's promises and dealings, and not personal vanity, pointed directly to this unsought honor.

The mutual pledges of fidelity to the obligations existing between the ruler and his people were exchanged, and the hour of coronation appointed. The occasion was one of imposing magnificence. The outlaw of Saul's court appeared before the vast and excited multitude, many of them strangers from a great distance. Army officers and their battalions, with spear and helmet, the venerable elders, and the priests, — all were there beneath the smiling heavens. Encircled by a guard of armed men, and arrayed in a purple robe, stood the still youthful David. The sacred oil, which was always put upon the brow of the first sovereign of a new dynasty, was poured by the high-priest upon his head.

Samuel's anointing was only *prophetic* of what was to be ; now, the grand inauguration



has come ; he is consecrated by the nation to his office as God's vicegerent.

The sceptre, which in Saul's reign was a spear, and later a golden rod, or similar symbol of power, is placed in his hand ; the written covenant of righteous sovereignty and sincere loyalty is given to him ; the royal, resplendent diadem laid upon his brow ; the chain upon his neck, and the bracelets on his arms.

The ceremonies of enthronement are over, and the vast procession moves towards the city gates, with the acclamation ringing above the tumult of enthusiastic applause, "*Long live the king!*"

Songs and instrumental music express the popular joy. When the sovereign is seated on his throne, the multitude of happy subjects reverently offer their congratulations to him.

David closes the splendid pageant with a three-days' festival, for which the adjacent tribes generously furnish all the luxuries of the land in abundance.

At length the feast is over, and the host begin to disperse — the long lines of the



returning Hebrews to their homes radiating in every direction from Hebron.

David was scarcely seated on the throne of the nation, before his thoughts were directed to a more convenient and fitting capital for his extended realm. Lying about twenty miles north of Hebron was a remarkable town called Jebus, or Jebusi, belonging to the Jebusites, a remnant of the old Canaanites. Its name, before Joshua led Israel's host from the wanderings in the wilderness to their promised possessions, was Salem. Near it Abraham laid Isaac on the altar, and also met Melchizedek five hundred years before the crowning of David at Hebron. Its position — central in relation to the rest of the world, elevated, and very strong in its munition of hills — was unequalled.

The place was one of the most ancient known, and regarded with veneration even by the Egyptians. On the north rose the snow-crowned summits of Lebanon; southward lay the burning deserts of Arabia; and to the west were the blue waters of the Mediterranean, — all combining to make a climate



of singular changefulness, and variety in temperature.

The monarch of Israel determined to besiege and take Jebus from the sovereignty of his pagan enemies. The call for men met with a prompt response, and a large force was soon at his command. Leaving his throne and capital, he marched to Jebus, surrounded and took the city. He immediately removed the capital to the captured town, whose heathen name was exchanged for the City of David. It was afterwards called Jerusalem and Mount Zion.

Hiram, who ruled at Tyre, — a rich and splendid city on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, — heard of the new sovereign of the Hebrew people, and shrewdly resolved to court his favor, and make a treaty with the popular prince. We doubt whether a king ever more gracefully and winningly sought a peaceful alliance. He sent ambassadors, accompanied with architects and workmen, who were followed by freight trains with cedar trees and other materials, for the building of a palace in Jerusalem. The respectful and dignified address corresponded with this exhibition



of good will, and Hiram and David, and, later, Solomon, were warm and magnanimous friends.

The monarch's rising greatness awakened the fears of the Philistines; and to check it, before it became irresistible, they marshalled their forces near Jerusalem, only to retreat before David, who had sought God's counsel in his extremity.

The Hebrew king knew the power of prayer, the simple and mighty refuge of the soul in every peril of human life and destiny. It never failed when resorted to sincerely and humbly.

Peace was restored to Israel, and its sovereign's devout heart turned to the execution of a cherished design, which recent hostilities had delayed.

The ark of God, which contained the two tables of the law given to Moses, beside which was laid the golden vase of manna, the rod of Aaron, and the books of Moses, — itself the symbol of the divine presence, — was at Kirjath-jearim, nine miles distant, and not far from Nob, where the priests resided.

David prepared for its removal to the me-



tropolis, with a display of sacred enthusiasm worthy of the great occasion. Nothing could better show his loyalty to God, nor more impressively strengthen his sway, than this public and solemn deposit of the ark in the capital of his kingdom.

A day was appointed, and the "chosen men of Israel" summoned to join their king in the grand procession. The high-priest, with the chief priests under him, the princes, the rulers, and the leaders of the tribes were there. *Thirty thousand* of Israel's picked men were assembled at Kirjath-jearim on the bright, auspicious day. David was aglow with the hallowed mission. The moment of departure came; the holy ark was borne from its seclusion upon a "new cart," drawn by oxen; while the long procession attended it with music on harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets, and cymbals.

What a magnificent march was that along the winding way among the hills of Palestine towards Jerusalem! The mute, unconscious, patient oxen drew the precious symbol of Jehovah's presence over the quiet paths, above which rang the harmonies and acclamations of



thirty thousand noble men! The cavalcade emerged from a solitary valley into the harvest fields of Nachon. Near his threshing-floor, perhaps their attention attracted by its grain, the oxen stumbled. The ark seemed in danger, and Uzzah, a son of Abinadab, in whose house it had been kept, having, with his brother, charge of the oxen, put out his hand to steady it.

But even the Kohathrites, who were appointed from the Levites to carry the ark after it was covered by the priests, were allowed to touch only the staves by which they held it. In some unrecorded manner "God smote Uzzah for his error, and there he died by the ark of God."

David was "displeased," and then greatly alarmed, fearing, after all, to have the ark so near him. Like Jonah, when his gourd withered, David indulged in passionate and rebellious feelings because of the Lord's judgments, which cast a sudden gloom on his jubilant ceremonies.

This unholy spirit, with his alarm, decided him at once to let the ark remain there. At his command it was taken to the house near



by of Obed-edom, the Gittite, who welcomed this visible token of God's regard for his chosen people. The good man was rewarded for his faith and love by the Lord's special blessing upon his household.

Very instructive is the contrast between David's irritation and timidity, under God's awful rebuke of irreverence, and the Levite's reception of the ark, with the smile of Jehovah attending his loving care of the precious memorial of the just yet merciful Lawgiver. Three months passed quickly, but they gave David time to mark God's regard for the ark of his covenant, and reflect upon his sinful fears, and his rebellion against the ways of Providence with him.

He now resolved to attempt once more the removal of the ark, for which he had prepared a place in the tabernacle at Jerusalem.

Again, the chief men of Israel were summoned to the resting-place of the ark; and from all the land of Israel, the priests, captains, and leaders of the tribes were on the march for Perez-uzzah, as David called the dwelling-place of Obed-edom, because of the "breach of Uzzah;" i. e., this son of Abina-



dab fell there under the wrathful stroke of the Lord. The king confessed that he did not rightly interpret and improve God's providence. The arrangements for bringing the ark to "Mount Zion" were more imposing than before.

The king laid aside the robes of royalty, and put on the ephod. This garment, resembling a cloak, falling down on the back and front, and clasped at the shoulders, was usually worn by the high-priest. The monarch took his place among the subjects of the Eternal King, to have him honored alone.

He did not assume a priestly emblem as such, but this garment was sometimes worn by distinguished persons; and David preferred to appear without a display of earthly power, when Jehovah, represented by the ark of his covenant, should alone be exalted in the thoughts of the people.

No sooner was the magnificent cavalcade on the march, stretching away into the valley towards Jerusalem, than a halt was ordered by the king. His grateful heart must have a public expression of its deep emotions; and sacrifices of oxen and fatlings were soon





Return of the Ark. Page 117.







smoking upon altars doubtless reared for the occasion, and surrounded by the priests. After the offerings were made, the long line was again in motion. The music of harps, cornets, and cymbals rose and floated over the vast multitude, while David "danced," or kept time, in his great rejoicing, to the measures of song and instrumental harmony.

Nothing shows a greater ignorance of ancient customs and Bible teaching than to quote this exultation, and the declaration, "There is a time to dance," as arguments, or an apology, for the irreligion, folly, and ruin of soul and body which attend the dancing of modern times. Who does not know that waltzing is grossly immoral, and the midnight ball destructive of morals and health?

And who would not be shocked, or smile with ridicule, at the suggestion of prayer, or even devout praise, at a *dance*, whether in the domestic circle or in the public hall?

The joyful movements of the Orientals on great occasions had not the faintest resemblance to the dissipation of dancing now. But the question may be asked, Are not amusements of all kinds, "properly regu-



lated," *harmless?* No; the wine-cup, the card-table, and the dance have become so thoroughly and universally perverted, that whoever attempts to *regulate* them not only utterly fails, but is claimed and quoted by the vender and drinker of ardent spirits, the gambler, and the gayest reveller, in their defence of the several and fatal dissipations.

Nor is this all: a dying man, who feels unprepared to meet God, will not call to his bedside a Christian, with whom he has associated in these pleasures, to intercede with God for him, and point him to the self-denying, blameless Redeemer.

The grand and exulting procession suddenly came in sight of their capital, and joined in the words composed by their royal leader:—

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of Glory shall come in.”

The melodious shout ceased, and a band of singers and players replied,—

“Who is this King of Glory?”

From another company of musicians came back the response,—



“The Lord, strong and mighty;  
The Lord, mighty in battle.”

Then, again, the full tide of harmony swelled  
upon the air: —

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
Even lift them up, ye everlasting doors,  
And the King of Glory shall come in.”

The joyful interrogation was heard once more,  
“Who is this King of Glory?” The rapturous  
reply rolled over the multitude, —

“The Lord of Hosts;  
He is the King of Glory.”

The ark passed then through the city gates,  
and was placed in the tabernacle designed to  
protect it until a fitting temple should be  
reared for the worship of God. As soon as  
the sacred symbol was at rest, the blood of  
sacrifices again flowed, and their flames, with  
the smoke of incense and peace-offerings,  
went up before the hallowed enclosure.

At the close of the devout thanksgiving the  
monarch of Israel pronounced a solemn bene-  
diction. The people were then supplied with  
refreshments in rich abundance. Dividing



into companies, according to the tribes and the direction thence of their places of abode, they diverged towards the various points of the compass, along the paths of travel. We may not doubt that the king watched them with strong and mingled emotions. All the tribes were represented in this united, peaceful, and delightful celebration of the most sacred and hopeful event that had marked his reign. Then turning his tearful eye, in the fading light, to the tabernacle, he lifted his thankful adoration to God, whose pledge of his presence and favor was now near his throne. But he little thought of the strange and humiliating contrast awaiting him. Turning his steps towards his palace to repeat the blessing upon his household, his reverie was rudely broken by the shadow of Michal, his wife, upon his path. She had seen from her window the uncrowned sovereign of Israel wearing the linen ephod, and dancing before the ark, and, with her father's gloomy despotism as her ideal, her wounded pride must pour its scorn in bitter words upon David. Scarcely had his eye fallen upon her withering expression of countenance before the storm



burst upon him. How keen and cutting the irony of her speech! "How glorious was the the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!"

She thus compared the monarch to a vain and reckless youth who wantonly made a display of himself upon a festive occasion. David indignantly repelled the charge, declaring the purity of his purpose, and the appreciation of it by the people, and the desire to have more of such dishonor. It was heroism like that of the words which the lips of a dying young minister have made immortal — "Stand up for Jesus." God rebuked Michal by denying her (what Jewish wives most desired, because of the honor in which offspring were held), children to the day of her death.

David immediately proceeded to restore the order of sacred rites, interrupted by the seclusion of the ark and the slaughter of priests at Nob.

The throne was established, and the king's residence worthy of its sovereign. Peace gave David leisure for attention to the



religious interests of his people. He longed to see a splendid temple to the honor of Jehovah upon Mount Zion. He consulted Nathan, a noble prophet, who approved the design, and told him to go forward in its execution.

But, upon consulting the Lord directly in the matter, Nathan told his sovereign that he would not be allowed to build the sacred edifice, because he had been a "man of blood,"—that is, a warrior,—and would have enough to do to prepare the way for the peaceful reign of a son who would fulfil all the pious wishes of his heart.

David was not only satisfied with God's decision, but, in his overflowing gratitude for the gracious promises to his family, went to the tabernacle, and poured forth there his ascriptions of praise, exclaiming in his humility, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?"

Recognizing the divine sovereignty and glory in all these dealings, he extolled the greatness of the Majesty on high, renewing his covenant, and appealing to the Lord's



faithfulness and mercy as the ground of the expectation to receive the promised blessings.

How beautiful the example of grateful resignation!

He gave up his cherished purpose to build a temple without a murmur, and rested, with unfeigned self-renunciation, upon the pledges of a covenant-keeping God. Such a spirit of submission is rare, even under the light of gospel day — the frame of mind which alone gives perfect peace, in life and in death.

The swift years of tranquillity went by, and Israel's army again met and overcame the Philistines. When the land was quiet, David's thoughts, for some reason, were directed tenderly to the former friendship of Jonathan. It may have been simply the sudden suggestion of a meditative retrospect of early years, that possibly his true friend might be represented by a descendant unknown to him. For it is recorded that he one day inquired of his attendants, —

"Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"



Ziba, a former servant of Saul, was found, and brought before the king to answer, and said that there was yet a son of Jonathan living, who was lame in his feet. It was Mephibosheth.

"Where is he?" inquired David.

"Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel," replied Ziba, "in Lo-debar;" a country probably some distance beyond the Jordan.

David immediately despatched messengers for Mephibosheth, who was brought to Jerusalem. When he came into the presence of the king, he prostrated himself on the ground with the most respectful obeisance. On being called by name, he arose and said, "Behold thy servant."

"Fear not," was the benignant address of David, "for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."

Mephibosheth replied, bowing himself before the king, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" He regarded himself as so insignifi-



cant and inefficient a being, that he could hardly believe it possible for this great and unexpected favor to be conferred upon him.

David then sent for Ziba, and informed him of what was to be done for Mephibosheth. "Thou, therefore," he added, "and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat; but Mephibosheth, thy master's son, shall eat bread alway at my table." Ziba promised a faithful compliance with this command, which he was able to do, for he had fifteen sons and twenty servants; "and all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth."

The lame man became the monarch's honored guest.

Whatever may have been the frailties and sins of David's eventful life, in all his relations to his people, and in his fidelity to his obligations both to God and man, when we consider the age in which he lived and reigned, he was incomparably superior to any contemporary sovereign or subject of whom we have any detailed narrative. He disdained that meanest of all human arrogance, the



scorn or neglect of unfortunate and poor relatives or friends.

There can be no display of pride more hateful to God, than contempt of misfortune and poverty without reference to personal merit or claims upon benevolent regard.

The military campaigns of David, during which occurred the darkest, saddest error of his life, the murder of Uriah, to obtain his beautiful wife, and whose history will include the great conspiracy of Absalom, that broke up the king's court for a time, at Jerusalem, followed by an inferior revolt, will be recorded in the annals of the Camp of David.

The period referred to was a stormy one in the reign of the Hebrew monarch. But the effect of the Lord's varied discipline upon his character and usefulness was very great, as a glance at his poetry will reveal, when we come to his career as the "sweet singer of Israel." How truthful the words of another pensive and pious bard! —

"God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants his footsteps on the sea,

And rides upon the storm."



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CLOSING SCENES OF DAVID'S REIGN.



HE reign of David had reached its last decade of years, when a new form of national calamity came upon the land of Israel; a famine, which filled three of them with suffering throughout the realm.

We cannot tell why David so long neglected to inquire of God the reason of this chastisement, but Jehovah restrained him by his providence in some way; doubtless because he would have the judgment take effect before it was removed. When the afflicted monarch did go to God, he was assured that it was for "Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites," that the blight of fruitlessness had fallen on Palestine. This is a dark, mysterious hint at one of Saul's cruel acts of despotic power. The crafty man-



agement of the Gibeonites to make a league with Joshua upon his entrance into Palestine and successful invasion of it, is recorded in the ninth chapter of the book bearing that great leader's name. These pagan dwellers in the country were promised security of life and property, but upon the discovery of their fraud were condemned to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the congregation and the temple-service.

Apparently they had abandoned idolatry, and were living quietly among the Hebrews, when to make a display of regard for his own people, and so increase their loyalty, Saul made havoc among the remnant of the Gibeonites in wanton violation of the most sacred pledges kept for centuries.

There is another mystery in the Lord's deferring the expression of his anger until Saul was dead and his successor had held the sceptre for more than a score of years.

But he knew, and always knows, *when* the blow ought to fall upon a nation or an individual to secure the highest result of his discipline, and never errs in his paternal chastisements.



David then consulted the Gibeonites in regard to the avenging of the wrong Saul had inflicted upon them. There was no vindictive desire to punish the guilty; but God plainly required a retributive display of his justice, and the king must do the will of the Infinite One. No rational being can complain of simple *justice*. However severe its penalties for wrong-doing, they must be *right*; and mercy is not only unmerited, but may become cruel compassion in its effect on society.

The injured Canaanites replied to David, that they wanted none of Saul's money, nor harm to any Israelite among the common people. But when he urged them to tell him what they deemed a proper method of vindicating their rights, and making them, by thus securing the divine favor, a blessing to the land, they demanded the execution of seven of Saul's sons, because they, with their father, were the great criminals.

The place proposed for the tragedy was Gibeah, the former residence of Saul, to make the scene more impressive by this coincidence. David complied with the startling demand,



and ordered the princes to be delivered to the Gibeonites.

It was barley harvest, corresponding to early April in our climate, when this day for dispensing public justice dawned. The throng of injured Canaanites, and from adjacent tribes of Israel, gathered to Gibeah. The scaffold threw its awful shadow over the barren fields blasted by famine around it. The weeping mothers were doubtless there; for, when the spectators had dispersed, and those seven bodies swung gloomily high in the air, almost beneath them there stood upon a rock a tent, whose aspect was in perfect harmony with the dismal work of death. It was of sackcloth, and covered the form of Rizpah, the mother of two of the slain men.

She was evidently a devoted mother, whose heart was broken; for there she staid, week after week, to keep away by day the birds of the air, and at night the devouring beasts of the forest.

At length the rainy season came on, and it was told David how the poor mother was watching the decaying forms of the slain, regardless of the storm. His spirit was sympa-



thizing, and not resentful, towards the family of his bitterest foe for many years, and he immediately ordered the bodies, with those of Saul and his sons who had died before, to be all removed to the burial-place of Kish, the departed monarch's father, and there honorably interred.

What touching glimpses have we here of maternal affection — earth's strongest, most sacred love, and of David's nobility of nature !

"The wages of sin is death," and they are received at some time and somewhere if penitence and pardon do not cancel the record of guilt.

God's displeasure passed away with that funeral service at the sepulchre of Kish, and plenty again smiled upon the slopes and plains of Palestine.

There are, it cannot be denied, difficulties in this story of the Gibeonites. And there are Christian critics who believe the slaughter of Saul's sons was instigated by the priests because he slew their predecessors at Nob, while David himself wished to be rid of the household of the persecuting king. But the



Bible gives no hint of the kind, and we are permitted to let David have the benefit of this silence, in the light of his unquestioned virtues.

After beating back the Philistine invaders again, in the royal pride of military success, he determined to take a census of his available men of war in the kingdom.

To this act of self-glorying, it is said, God "moved David," that he might inflict needed discipline upon the nation. Jehovah allowed the tempter to succeed in his dark design, withdrawing his restraining grace from the king.

There are, as we have seen before, impenetrable mysteries in the Bible; in other words, partial revelations of truth, leaving "parts of his ways" in the shadow of God's throne, or rather, we may say, in the unapproachable light of his "secret pavilion." Man may speculate, but he cannot solve these problems of Jehovah's providence and grace. To humble us and develop faith he keeps his own counsels, and often also a perplexing silence respecting his purpose. We are thus limited in our researches on every hand; and



Job's question is forced upon the soul, "Canst thou by searching find out God."

The king's order was placed in the hands of Joab, his commander-in-chief. The vain and needless mandate surprised and offended the chieftain. With the reverence due to his sovereign he expressed his condemnation of the enterprise, along with the hope that the king's subjects might be increased a hundred fold. The captains joined with their general in protesting against the enumeration. Opposition was fruitless, and the work was commenced. For nearly ten months, with a heavy heart and sternly sad countenance, Joab, with his subordinate officers, went through the tribes of Israel, taking the names, looking into thousands of faces on which would soon come the palor of sudden and awful death.

The general hastened the census, passing by the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, because "the king's word was abominable to Joab," — the strongest possible indication of the chieftain's deep disgust with the service he was compelled to perform for his erring sovereign.

The number of the valiant men who could



bear the sword in battle was eight hundred thousand in Israel, and five hundred thousand in Judah. In the book of Samuel the sum is larger — the difference in the statements is owing either to the omission in one case of the two tribes, or errors in transcribing the sacred manuscript; but whatever the cause, the discrepancy is of no practical importance to any reader of the Bible. God seems to have designed these unimportant disagreements in the Scripture on purpose to give exercise to faith, whose triumphs are the soul's present joys, and to reveal the heart's depravity, or natural aversion to God and holiness. How eagerly unrenewed men seize upon these apparently conflicting statements, rejecting with scorn its glorious way of salvation, which a child can understand!

Scarcely had the monarch received the census from Joab before his heart "smote him," and he cried unto God for mercy. In response the Lord sent "Gad, David's seer," to offer the choice of three fearful forms of judgment, for it was too late to hear the prayer for pity unmixed with retribution.

It is evident that the nation had departed



from God, and, no less than their king, needed terrible reproof.

The prophet's message was in these thrilling words: "Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemy while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land?"

There was no escape from a choice, which Gad, in Jehovah's name, demanded. The awestruck, agitated monarch had never before been in such a relation to his eternal King; and after a moment's suspense he replied, with wonted loyalty and confidence towards God, "I am in a great strait. Let us now fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; let me not fall into the hand of man."

His life had been spent among earthly enemies, and he preferred to have God decide between the direct judgments of his perfect administration.

How brightly the real character of the sinning sovereign shines through the gloom and



terror of the emergency — the ruling purpose of obedience to the Lord, and loving trust in him !

We are in Jehovah's hand, and there is safety and peace alone in choosing to be there, with a submissive, affectionate spirit.

Infinite wisdom made short work of the chastisement, sending a consuming pestilence upon the people, which spread like fire on a prairie, throughout the land of Israel. The aged and the young, the armed man and the maiden, shrieked with agony, gasped and died ; until seventy thousand, as the third day's sun went down, lay ghastly in death, or were already buried.

Surrounded by the venerable elders, the king sat in sackcloth, they unitedly beseeching an offended God to spare his people. Suddenly their weeping eyes are upturned to the unanswering heavens ; and lo, a new signal of vengeance !

In mid air, with flaming sword in hand, and waved over Jerusalem, stands the destroying angel. No description of that majestic and awful presence is attempted. It is enough to know that at the sight David and the elders



were overwhelmed with alarm, and laid their faces in the dust.

Then, with the humility and self-forgetful regard for Israel of the great lawgiver and leader, Moses, when God threatened the entire destruction of the Hebrews, the king exclaimed, from the ground wet with his tears, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house, but not on thy people, that they should be plagued."

The work of discipline was accomplished; and Gad was sent by the angel to David to bid him come to the spot over which he stood, the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite, and build an altar for sacrifice.

Upon the approach of the mourning company Ornan emerged from a hiding-place, to which, with his four sons who were threshing wheat, he fled when they saw the angel. He bowed to the earth before his ruler. David immediately apprised the terrified man of his object in visiting him, and proposed to purchase the threshing-floor, whereon to build an altar; the instruments of threshing for



wood, and the oxen for the victims of sacrifice.

This floor was an elevated part of the field, levelled and made hard; and on this the bundles of grain were laid, and beaten with wooden clubs, or trodden by the hoofs of cattle.

Ornan refused to sell, but gave the whole to the king freely and gladly. Not only did the judgment of God appeal to his hopes and fears, but he was a true-hearted subject of his heavenly and his earthly king.

David disdained to offer God what cost him nothing, and insisted on paying six hundred and fifty shekels of gold, or nearly four thousand dollars of our money.

Then followed a scene like that on Mount Carmel when Elijah met the prophets of Baal. Upon the bleeding sacrifice fell the fire from heaven, consuming it in a moment, to the joyful surprise of the anxious beholders. They looked upward again, and the glittering blade was in its scabbard, and the serenity of reconciliation upon the brow of the avenger.

David felt that Jehovah had consecrated the spot, and the offerings continued to send up



their accepted flame to God there, ever after. It was chosen by the king to be the site of the grand temple to be built by his successor.

Thus the Judge of all the earth, the author of life, the sovereign of nations, with but little explanation of his procedure, displayed his justice, humbled his people, and designated the very place for his glorious temple.

David now addressed himself zealously to the preparations for building the temple, "the pattern" of which, he said, "the Lord made him to understand in writing by his hand upon him." The land was astir with the mighty undertaking. Foreign residents were set to work in the quarries, and the people sent in iron and brass, while from Tyre and Zidon came cargoes of cedar.

The youthful Solomon was apprised of God's promises and purposes by his father, charged most impressively to be faithful to his trust and to God, and encouraged with words of holy cheer.

The inventory of materials, which he gave to Solomon, was a wonderful index of his resources: he had a hundred thousand talents of gold, or more than two billions of dollars;



a million of talents of silver, which was nearly as much more, with brass and iron "without weight," and "timber and stone in abundance."

In the midst of these grateful scenes to his heart, David was confronted by a fresh domestic trial. Adonijah, his fourth son, who resembled his brother Absalom in personal beauty and ambition, put on the airs of royalty, and openly talked of wearing the crown. He won over Joab, Abiathar the priest, and other leading men, who withdrew with him to the rock Zohemoth, by the fountain Enrogel, lying south of Jerusalem. The true-hearted Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, if she knew of the movement, of which her husband was certainly ignorant, suggesting a plan that would save her own and Solomon's life. He proposed that she go to the aged king, remind him of his promise to her son, and tell him of Adonijah's attempt to defeat the solemn pledge; then, as if by accident, he would follow after her, and confirm her words by a repetition of the appeal.

The wise and timely interposition was successful. David renewed his covenant, and the









David appoints Solomon. Page 141.



full heart of Bathsheba exclaimed, "Let my lord king David live forever!"

David sent for Zadok, a priest, Nathan, and Benaiah, captain of the guards, and issued his orders: "Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon," — this was a fountain on the west of Jerusalem, — "and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel; and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon! Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead; and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel, and over Judah."

Quickly the sacred oil from the tabernacle was poured by Zadok on Solomon's fair young brow, a trumpet-blast announced the royal consecration, and the shout of the people went up — "God save king Solomon!"

Adonijah and his adherents heard the glad tumult, and seeing Jonathan, son of Abiathar, coming from the scene, hailed him to learn the meaning of it all.

This messenger gave a true account of the



coronation, and added, that congratulations had passed between David and his servants over the joyful event.

The terror-smitten prince with his friends fled for their lives. He entered into the sanctuary, and grasping the horns of the altar, trusted to the hallowed refuge for safety. His life was spared magnanimously by Solomon on conditions of good behavior ever after.

To confirm his son in power David called together a grand assemblage of the people, similar to that which brought the ark of the covenant to his metropolis. The orchestra alone, which furnished the instrumental music, numbered four thousand performers. The venerable monarch addressed the concourse, alluding to his relation to the building of the temple, and declaring Solomon's divine and human right to the throne, closing with an eloquent, tender, and subduing charge to the people and to Solomon. What nobler, more stirring words ever fell from any mortal lips than these? —

“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a



perfect heart, and with a willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts : if thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. Take heed now ; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for the sanctuary ; be strong and do it."

These words are as true to-day as then, and should be engraven on the tablets of every youthful memory, and govern the life : "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee ; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever." The world's entire annals illustrate this great truth of God's dealings with fallen man, finding its most vivid revelations on the dying bed. David again made an address to the vast congregation of his subjects, with some additional suggestions touching Solomon's need of sympathy and aid, and mentioning the treasures of gold of Ophir and refined silver, which, from his own possessions, he had dedicated to the building of the temple.

The tide of feeling, that rose to the highest



sacred enthusiasm, is beautifully described in the living oracles : —

“Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord ; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.” He exclaimed, with adoring ardor, “Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty ; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine ; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all ; and in thy hand is power and might ; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers : our days on the earth are as a shad-



ow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee a house for thy holy name cometh of thy hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee; and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision."

David then called upon the whole congregation to bless the Lord their God. They did so with united voice, bowing their heads in deepest reverence before God, and loyalty to their king.

The next day there were sacrifices and burnt-offerings, followed by a feast the people



celebrated with great gladness. Solomon was anointed king a second time, and Zadok to be priest. A universal sentiment of allegiance to their new sovereign prevailed. "All Israel obeyed him; and all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel."

The life of David was drawing to a close. He felt it, and gave his last affecting charge to Solomon. "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: that the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart, and with



all their soul, there shall not fail thee, said he, a man on the throne of Israel."

He reminded Solomon of the guilt of Joab in putting to death Abner and Amasa in cold blood: "Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace."

This would be nothing more than inflicting the penalty of the law upon a murderer. David, in his official capacity, might have done this before, but feared to do it, on account of Joab, and the state of public affairs. The duty of bringing the criminal to justice he now devolved upon Solomon, leaving it to his discretion to select the time and the mode.

"But show kindness," he continued, "unto the sons of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table; for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother."

"And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee



to death with the sword. Now therefore hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood."

Some commentators think that David intended to "give an explicit direction to Solomon to put Shimei to death. They say, it is probable that Shimei took a part in the rebellion of Adonijah, as well as in that of Absalom. David therefore warned Solomon to consider him as still cherishing his old rancorous and vindictive spirit, and to be on his guard against a traitor who would doubtless soon commit some other act to render him obnoxious to the punishment of death, in inflicting which Solomon's wisdom would direct him how to act discreetly and justly. They say too, that although David swore to Shimei that he should not die, it evidently implied that David would not himself cause him to be put to death, and especially at the time when he acted in so traitorous and insulting a manner. He gave Shimei, as it were, a kind of reprieve, and now Solomon would be at liberty, as the head of the nation, to do



what he thought was right in the matter, taking into account also the present character of Shimei, together with his future conduct."

Others suppose that the passage, in which David gives the charge to Solomon respecting Shimei, should be rendered — "Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless, — for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him, — but bring *not* down his hoar head to the grave with blood."

In these acts, therefore, the character of David is free from reproach. He did nothing more than was required of him, in his official capacity, to promote the great ends of justice, and provide for the welfare of the nation; while, as an individual, he scrupulously fulfilled his promises, and showed that he was influenced by no personal feelings of vindictive resentment.

How simple the narrative of the last hours of David. "He died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor;" and he "slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David."

Thus calmly closed one of the most tran-



quill, romantic lives in its early morning; stormiest in its advancing and declining day, and one of the most splendid in achievements, and in results to the world, in the history of mankind.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE KING'S CABINET AND HOUSEHOLD.



HE government of Palestine, under David, began in the form of a limited or constitutional monarchy, resembling in this feature the sovereignty of England. That is to say, he entered into a league with the people, and there were mutual obligations by each party to be sacredly regarded. Gradually the power became absolute, and David, like surrounding Oriental kings, was an autocrat, wielding a sceptre of unquestioned supremacy. And yet how much superior to those pagan despots was the "son of Jesse," even in the abuse of power: his very sins were trivial in comparison to their lawless depravity.

First in David's cabinet was Jonathan, his uncle, who seems to have been a judicious adviser, and a scribe; in fact, his secretary



of state, and a man of acknowledged wisdom and worth.

Next in rank was Jehiel, private tutor to the king's sons. Although little is recorded of him, he must have been preëminent in gifts and the culture of the times, to have held a position of so great responsibility, — a relation to the monarch of the nearest domestic interest and influence.

The third cabinet officer was Ahithophel, a special counsellor. His political sagacity was so extraordinary, that he alone is mentioned in the Bible as having such oracular dignity among the Hebrews, apart from prophetic inspiration. The name of Ahithophel means *brother of foolishness*, whose significance he singularly illustrated when he abandoned David for Absalom, and then, because his counsel was not followed, went home and hanged himself. He is the only suicide, strictly speaking, mentioned in the Old Testament. Samson and Saul deliberately caused their own death, but not by their own hands.

Hushai, the fourth in order, is termed the "king's companion," — indicating a congeniality and sympathy, which, to some degree,



supplied the loss of Jonathan's goodly fellowship. It was his shrewd management that defeated the plotting of Ahithophel.

Jehoiada, the son of Benaiah, is the fifth member of the cabinet mentioned, while he is put next to Ahithophel in political wisdom and importance. The most learned expounders of the Scriptures find great difficulty in determining just who Jehoiada was, because to suppose his father to have been Benaiah, the military hero, they think would make him too young to have a place second only to Ahithophel in honor, on account of his ability and knowledge in public affairs. But we shall never in time have the vexed question settled, — another instance of God's indifference to the mere questioning or cavils of human curiosity and self-conceit.

Abiathar, the priest, makes the sixth dignitary around the monarch of Israel. The word means *father of abundance*. He was the tenth Hebrew high-priest, and the fourth in descent from Eli. When comparatively young he escaped the slaughter of eighty-five priests, at Nob, by Saul, and fled to David's care, at Adullam, carrying with him the



ephod, and becoming there the priest of David.

When David ascended the throne of Judah at Hebron, Abiathar was appointed high-priest. At the same moment Zadok held the office by the appointment of Saul, upon the rejection of the house of Eli, whose erring sons were slain in battle. Both were good men for the place, but two high-priests seemed as absurd as two kings of a single realm. What could David do? It would be hard to depose Abiathar, who had been his faithful priestly friend during his wanderings in the wilderness, and he had no authority to set aside the regularly appointed successor of Eli, thus offending the Hebrews, who, recently the subjects of Saul, recognized Zadok as their high-priest. He at length escaped the dilemma by allowing both to remain in office, sharing the responsibilities and duties of the sacred service. But when Abiathar joined Adonijah in his futile attempt to get the crown, he forfeited all his sacred honors. Solomon removed him from office, plainly telling him that his sacerdotal character alone saved him from death.



He retired to private life; and thus ended the line of Ithamar, Aaron's youngest son, to which belonged the extinct house of Eli, whose doom Jehovah had years before sealed and declared.

Zadok was descended from Eleazar, the eldest son of Aaron, the senior branch of the divinely-appointed priesthood.

In connection with these six members of the king's cabinet, his general, Joab, is mentioned, without any further notice of him in this relation.

We have no records of the cabinet meetings, the details of the governmental business in which the members of it shared. The grand conferences between the monarch and the men nearest his throne, during the exciting periods of his reign, are as unknown as their ashes, and will be until the judgment day.

In the regal establishment were twelve royal bailiffs, or officers in charge of the king's resources and wealth.

Over David's treasures of gold and silver, and all his jewelry, was Azmaveth, the son of Adiel.



Jehonathan, whose father was Uzziah, had charge of the storehouses or magazines of the cities, and in the castles of the land.

Ezri was superintendent of agriculture; under his supervision was the general tillage.

Shimei was overseer of the vineyards, and Zabdi of the wine cellars.

Baal-hanan was put in charge of sycamore and olive trees of the valleys and plains, and Joash of the oil cellars. The olives yielded the best oil, if bruised and pressed while green. There was a peculiar kind of press, to use which the feet were employed, called *gathsheman*, or *gethsemane*, that is, *the oil-press*.

How appropriately it is applied to the place where Jesus sweat for us, "as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground."

Shitrai was over the herds on the plains of Sharon, and Shaphat of those in the valleys.

Obil, an Ishmaelite, was bailiff in charge of the camels. His nationality gives us a glimpse of what doubtless was true of all these officers — their selection because particularly adapted by taste and culture to their several posts of duty. Obil, being an Ara-



bian, knew well how to manage the "ships of the desert."

Jedediah had charge of the asses — an animal quite as common then in the East as horses are here now.

Jaziz was shepherd-in-chief, — the royal flocks were led by him. And we cannot doubt those immense flocks, in their green pastures, were not only a beautiful sight, but very highly valued by the shepherd-king, whom they reminded of his early life in Bethlehem; and of the Lamb Isaiah saw in vision led to the slaughter.

There were also princes of the tribes, the "ancient men," who were their constant rulers, corresponding in position, but not in power, with the chiefs of Indian tribes.

\* They ranked among the most honorable officials of the realm, and were often consulted in affairs of interest to the tribes by David. Throughout his dominions order reigned. Everything was reduced to system. He believed practically in the divine law, and therefore human duty, in regard to ordering our secular affairs and our religious life methodically, leaving nothing out of the harmonious plan.



The immediate family of David was composed of six wives, and their six sons. Excepting brief notices of Michal, Abigail, Maacah, and Bathsheba, we know nothing of these female members of his household.

Of the young men, Absalom, Adonijah, and Solomon were conspicuous. The king's domestic trials were very severe, owing mainly to his ambitious marriages, bad maternal influences over his children, and the jealousies which attend the ancient Oriental custom of polygamy. But there was little resemblance in the plurality of wives, allowed in olden time, to modern Mormonism. The latter is the outgrowth of a monstrous and blasphemous delusion, introducing in a concentrated form, and under the sanctions of a new revelation from heaven, this bane of the original and sacred relation of husband and wife. Right in the midst of the Christian civilization of the nineteenth century we have this community, gathered from the disaffected and sceptical poor of nearly all lands, herding together. They resemble the Ishmaelites in their hostility to those who desire to live within the limits of their territory; and



sooner or later, like slavery, must this shameful outrage upon religion and social order go down, if necessary, in blood.

There is no charge recorded against David of unkindness in his family relations. He was evidently an affectionate husband and father, perhaps too indulgent to his children, some of whom were distinguished for genius and beauty — both dangerous gifts without the "graces of the Spirit."

Unsanctified intellect, and wealth, and personal attractions have wrecked millions, involving others in the same ruin, through the seductive power of an unhallowed influence.

God gave David a wonderful son when Solomon was born, the comfort and pride of his declining years. Under the sceptre in his youthful hand, the aged monarch saw, by the light of Jehovah's promises, the glory of Israel's temporal power rising to its zenith, crowned by the Shechinah flooding a temple of marvellous magnificence.

Solomon was a brilliant sovereign in natural gifts, and in the prosperity of his kingdom. His wealth and court display greatly exceeded his father's. His noble choice of



divine guidance as his chief good was the secret of all other blessings.

"It was his first to prove to the world that peace has greater triumphs and richer glories than war. All the useful as well as elegant arts found in him at once a pattern and a patron. He collected the floating wisdom of his country, after having intermingled it with his own, into compact shape. He framed a rude and stuttering science, beautiful, doubtless, in its simplicity, when he 'spake of all manner of trees,' from the cedar to the hysop. He summoned into being the power of commerce, and its infant feats were mighty, and seemed, in that day, magical. He began to bind hostile countries together by the mild tie of barter—a lesson which might have been taught him, in the forest of Lebanon, by the interchange between the 'gold clouds metropolitan' above, and the soft valleys of Eden below. He built palaces of new and noble architecture; and although no pictures adorned the gates of the temple, or shone above the altar of incense, or met the eyes of the thousands who worshipped within the court of the Gentiles, yet was not that tem-



ple itself — with its roof of marble and gold, its flights of steps, its altars of steaming incense, its cherubic shapes, its bulls and molten sea — one picture, painted on the canvas of the city of Jerusalem, with the aid of the hand which had painted long before the gallery of the heavens? In poetry, too, he excelled, without being so filled and transported by its power as his father; and, as with David, all his accomplishments and deeds were, during the greater part of his life, dedicated to, and accepted by, Heaven.”

Still, his character was a most singular combination of qualities. With heavenly light falling upon his genius, he stooped to sensual indulgence, and imitated in luxury the pagan monarchies around him. The close of his contradictory experience was full of sadness, without the clear accents of penitence which burst from David's lips. God has left his destiny under a cloud.

The reign of David was the great era of Hebrew history. It decided the continuance of the monarchy for nearly five centuries; it established a line of priesthood, and a “solemn religious worship by music and psalms



of exquisite beauty." His sovereignty, the grandest the world has known, will ever be solitary in significance, because of his relation to the Messiah.

David, in the achievements of the battlefield, was the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," as Christ is spiritually. The Hebrew monarchy itself, under him, was designed to prepare the way of the Lord, to gather imperishable materials for the kingdom of Him who was hailed by the voices of childhood shouting "hosannas to the Son of David."

We have not spoken of David as holding a patriarchal rank in the Scriptures, nor of the higher honor conferred upon him — a place among the prophets. In the book of Psalms, his predictions respecting Christ and his kingdom are manifold and clear.

Peter, in his great sermon on the day of Pentecost, said, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had, with an oath, sworn to him" that Jesus should



have his earthly lineage through his descendants, and sit on the throne of Israel, he predicted the Messiah's advent and glory. This prophetic inspiration will be clearly seen in our necessarily brief consideration of the Psalms.

While Moses was the lawgiver of Israel, and Elijah, in his preëminence among ancient seers, represented John the Baptist of the new dispensation, David was the type of Christ. He conquered his foes, and gave his treasures for the building of the temple. Jesus is "conquering and to conquer," having given his life-blood for that spiritual temple, so beautifully described in the second chapter of the First Epistle of Peter.

And David has for ages rejoiced in His smile, after whom the "whole family in heaven and earth are named." Into that family-fellowship, or forever away from it, shall we all soon be gathered.







## Part Third.

### THE CAMP OF DAVID.

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### DAVID'S MILITARY GENIUS AND CULTURE.



HE intellectual greatness of David appeared whenever a new demand was made upon his genius. His earliest appearance amid martial scenes was evidently his visit to the Hebrew camp, when the tented host were trembling under the loud challenge of Goliath of Gath. The only discipline for heroic deeds among the hills of Bethlehem, apart from his home, had been that of the victorious encounters with the wild beasts which invaded his flocks. But he was no dreaming poet whose harp merely beguiled the hours of a shepherd's solitude.



We do not doubt that he had reflected much upon the military achievements of his own people, and cherished the hope of meeting, at some time, their hostile and pagan neighbors on the field of battle. For, when he saw and heard the boastful Philistine and the alarm of Israel, he spoke with the intelligent heroism of a gifted soul not unfamiliar with the nature of the conflict, and the spirit with which it must be conducted by his countrymen. His religious faith was the great element of strength in his character.

History has no similar record of military genius, appearing unheralded and in a form of youthful bloom, to control and decide victoriously the issues of a great national battle.

The conquerors who led the armies of Greece and Rome were educated for their ambitious career. The modern prodigy of intellect and martial success, Napoleon, emerged from the walls of the best military schools into the stormy scenes of a French revolution.

David went from his sheep pastures, with his basket of supplies for his brothers, and sling in hand for any providential call upon his skill in its use.



We have not the least intimation that the young hero had any assurance of divine aid beyond the "present help in time of need," which had hitherto signally rewarded his faith in the living God.

The lofty courage of the boy cannot be appreciated without regarding him thus acting in the gallant spirit of patriotism and trust in the Almighty, instead of consciously commissioned to work a miraculous deliverance for his people. His indignation burned against the defiant pagan, and the cowardice of his own people; and he offered to bring on the decisive struggle by meeting the scornful Goliath. His confidence in God, as the ground of expected triumph, was simply that of Samuel, and Paul, and Luther, and Cromwell. The duty of the critical hour was plain; the results with God.

Never before nor since that combat has heaven looked down upon a sublimer earthly scene. The shepherd-volunteer, with firm and manly step, advances towards his gigantic foe, and lays him at his feet, between two vast and excited armies.

This opening scene in David's military



career suggests the whole question of the lawfulness of war.

However fearful the waste of life and property, and the demoralizing effects of the appeal to arms in the defence of national existence, its certainty and even necessity on a fallen sphere is recognized by precept and example in the Bible. That men *ought* to settle all quarrels and opposing claims without the cruel resort to sanguinary conflict, none can doubt or deny. But they never have, nor will they until the gospel of peace pervades society and governs the conscience and politics of the world. Self-protection, individually and nationally, sometimes demands the shedding of blood.

God expressly declares that David was designed by Him to be a "man of war," and to subdue the enemies of Israel. No sooner had he become an exile by the persecution of Saul, than he attracted to him, by the very magnetism of valor, fired by the inspiration of the Lord, adherents. Following his father's family, came adventurous spirits, chafing against the tyranny of Saul, and in sympathy with him — volunteers under his command.



Eleven Gadites from beyond Jordan are graphically described by the sacred historian: "They were men of might and of war, fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as roes upon the mountains."

The affair at Keilah, near the forest of Hareth, in whose deep seclusion David and his six hundred braves had their fortress, was the opening encounter with the Philistines. These ancient and warlike enemies of Israel embraced the favoring condition of affairs in Israel for a raid, and made a sudden assault upon this town of Judah, foraging and wasting on every hand. The burdened threshing-floors were swept of their grain, and the invaders, unharmed, returned with their spoils to their own land.

David was no bandit, nor lawless leader of roving Bedouins. He was a God-fearing exile, acting in self-defence, and waiting for the providential tokens of duty and destiny.

Through Abiathar, his priest, he sought the Lord's approval of an avenging pursuit of his enemies. Against fearful odds, before whose might his troops hesitated until reassured by



the command to go forward, the chieftain fought and conquered.

The gallant and brilliant achievement won the admiration of Saul, while it intensified his hate towards his rival.

During several years the chief led his men into the hostile regions on every side. His invasion of the wild tribes on the frontiers of Israel, and his avenging attack upon the camp of the Amalekites, after the sacking of Ziklag, were all successful. The latter would be called a splendid display of heroism and military dash in any age of the world.

Not always justifiable in his policy or action, but having the infirmities of our humanity, with false views on questions of public justice and social order peculiar to the age, he has left on the annals of his military career the undisguised errors of his tempted and unsanctified heart. But the day the crown was laid upon his brow in Hebron, he was incomparably the most gifted, heroic, and blameless prince on earth.

Exile life had made him not only fruitful in the resources of military skill necessity created, but he had learned the tactics and



strength of surrounding nations and tribes. He was prepared to defend his throne and people.

David increased the standing army introduced by Saul, and in all the material and appointments of war raised the military power of the Hebrews to an acknowledged superiority.

The sword and spear were the common arms for close conflicts, and the javelin, the bow, and the sling, for fighting the enemy at a distance. Ballistæ and catapults which threw stones and javelins, and even beams of wood, and battering-rams to break down walls, were the largest machines of war. The round shield or buckler, held in the left hand, the helmet covering the head, and the breastplate or cuirass clasped around the body, were the means of defence against hostile weapons.

Before commencing war, the Hebrews consulted the divine oracles, and the heathen nations resorted to witches, soothsayers, and similar counsellors. When a sudden invasion took the people by surprise, the alarm was given by messengers rapidly riding forth among the tribes, the sound of trumpets,



banners on the loftiest summits, and the clamor of voices on the mountains, echoing from summit to summit. As now, campaigns were opened in the spring and summer, the troops going into quarters for the winter.

Victories were attended with great destruction to the enemy. It was usual to raze cities to the ground, and take not only the natural products of the soil, but carry into captivity and sell the wives and children of the conquered foe. In the rude, unsettled state of society, such havoc was made to helplessly weaken, if impossible to annihilate, an enemy.

We have but a faint conception of the stirring scenes which followed a great victory. The wild lamentations of the defeated host over this spoliation were drowned by the glad shouts of triumph resounding along the hill-tops, and the music of the processions of women and children in the valleys.

Distinguished bravery was rewarded by valuable presents and honorable matrimonial alliances. David instituted a separate corps or order of soldiers who were the most renowned for valor.



The Cherethites and Pelethites, with Gittite heroes, were the body-guard of David, and numbered six hundred men.

They were choice warriors, whom the king relied upon for any daring service, and of whom any modern prince or commander would have been justly proud.

They figured especially in the great civil war under Absalom. The names, it is believed, mean "headsmen" and "foot-runners."

They seem to have resembled the Roman lictors, who carried the axe both as a badge of office and for effective use.

The Hebrews regarded themselves as the rightful possessors of Palestine, by Jehovah's appointment and by inheritance. Pagan invaders were, therefore, viewed in the strong light of lawless enemies of God and his people, entitled to no mercy.

David was a man of war, and a true Israelite. From the throne of Hebron went abroad the fear of no military despot, but the dread of a prince who represented in himself all the heroic qualities and the virtues of the nation to which he belonged.

But the glory of martial prowess is the last



to be coveted and sought for its own sake :  
it is at best "bloody renown."

The victors who are to be eternally honored  
win their laurels upon the plains of spiritual  
conflict, over whose triumphs the unseen an-  
gels sing.

What a question is a single couplet of the  
beautiful hymn, for every heart, and how its  
answer will appear when earthly conquerors  
and their slain armies stand before a common  
judgment seat, —

"Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the Lamb?"



## CHAPTER II.

### WAR WITH THE HOUSE OF SAUL.



ISH-BOSHETH, the only son of Saul who survived him, was the occasion of the new king's first appeal to arms. He was not in the great battle among whose slain were his father and brothers. A man of no strong qualities of character, he was easily influenced by a superior mind. Abner, his uncle, had been commander-in-chief of Saul's army, and was a general of splendid abilities and unscrupulous ambition.

He proudly resolved to prevent the acknowledgment of David's sovereignty over Israel. It was more than he could bear, to lay his honors at the feet of Jesse's exiled son, his master's royal rival, and *his own*, in the arena of military exploits.

Flattering Ish-bosheth with his legitimate



inheritance of the throne, he induced him to accept the crown. He escorted the prince to Mahanaim, a city of the Levites, lying within the territory of the tribe of Gad, upon the east of Jordan. No details are related of the steps taken to secure the consent of all the tribes but Judah to the inauguration of Saul's son. But the plot succeeded well, and the day came when the splendid pageant was to be witnessed at Mahanaim. The thousands of Israel's chosen men assembled there, and Abner was the ruling spirit of the revolt.

The holy oil was poured on the head of Ish-bosheth, the trumpets sounded, and the shout, "Long live the king!" rose above the multitude, and echoed among the solitary hills.

That day's sun went down upon an apparently successful conspiracy against the throne of David.

Mahanaim was chosen by Abner because it was the centre of the region on whose inhabitants he relied, and was a place of great security. The larger cities on the other side of Jordan were in the hands of the Philistines, or exposed to their raids.



The next move in the game of ambition and revolution was Abner's advance with his army to Gibeon, a city of Benjamin, the tribe to which the family of Saul belonged. The object of the march and occupation of the town, was to strengthen his cause in the sympathies of the tribes on whose territory his standard was planted, while moving southward towards Hebron in Judah.

The months passed by, and Abner's battalions were encamped at Gibeon, with no other result than the loyalty of all but the tribe of Judah to the sceptre of Saul's son.

At length David ordered Joab, his general-in-chief, to lead his troops against Abner, watch the enemy, and check his progress. Abishai and Asahel, his brothers, were able officers under him. They were David's nephews.

Abner summoned his forces to meet those of Joab. The armies came in sight of each other at the Pool of Gibeon, — an artificial reservoir of water, into which flowed a stream from the natural fountain in a cave just above it.

At Gibeon, Joshua fought his great battle,



when, to give him time to conquer gloriously, God gave the word of command that stayed the sun and moon in their courses. How this was done the Lord of the universe has not informed us; but his purposes include the whole order of nature, and what seems impossible to us is possible and easy with God.

Abner was on one side of the pool, and Joab on the other, the hostile legions lying face to face.

A singular proposition was now made by Abner. It was, that a number of young men from each army should "play before them;" that is, have a tournament, or military duel, in the presence of the generals and their troops. Soon twelve youthful soldiers from Joab's host stepped forth to meet an equal number of Benjamites from Abner's.

The meeting of the combatants seemed to madden them. They sprang like tigers to the conflict. In a moment the foemen were in deadly embrace, their hands buried in the hair, and their swords piercing the bodies of each other, until they all fell together in bloody, hideous death. The spot was well named *the field of rocky men*.





Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon. Page 178.







This heap of the slain was the signal of a general battle along the lines. Emulating the heroic twenty-four, who fought until the last heart had ceased to beat, the hostile ranks closed in deadly strife. The graphic expression, "There was a sore battle that day," tells the tragic story of the dire encounter.

With the declining sun the tide of battle turned against Abner, and his routed army began to retreat. Asahel, the son of Zeruiah, David's noble sister, who, on account of his remarkable fleetness, was said to be "as light of foot as a wild roe," pursued Abner. He was ambitious to have a grand trophy of his agility and valor. Gaining rapidly upon his enemy, he was soon within striking distance. Abner turned around, and inquiring if he were Asahel, when answered in the affirmative, begged of him to pursue some other fugitive, and be content to bear away the armor of a humbler man from the scene of conflict. But Asahel kept his undiverted eye upon Abner, resolved to seize him or lose all. The chieftain, either from fear or respect for his more than equal in the battle-field, told Asahel he desired to avoid killing the brother of Joab,



and begged him again to turn aside, and give his attention to another. But the young man only increased his pace, and stretched forth his hand towards Abner, when a back-stroke from the flying commander's spear brought Asahel to the ground. The blood gushed from the torn flesh; a gasp, followed by ghastly pallor, and Asahel was a corpse at Abner's feet.

The Hebrew warriors, hurrying after the foe, halted by the dead body, dumb with surprise and sorrow over the loss of a favorite commander, famous for the celerity of his movements no less than for his gallantry.

No higher tribute could have been paid to Asahel than this gathering host of pursuing countrymen around the crimsoned, manly form of the sleeper.

Joab and his remaining brother Abishai, doubtless exasperated by the murder, pressed on after Abner until the flush of the sun's farewell was fading in the western sky.

The pause in the general pursuit had given Abner's troops time to rally on the hill Armah, by the path through the wilderness of Gibeon. Abner was among them, watching



the approach of Joab, who halted when in speaking distance of his enemy.

Abner's voice was soon heard proposing a truce. He called aloud to Joab, "Shall the sword devour forever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be, then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?"

"As God liveth," replied Joab, "unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother;" intending to charge Abner with being the cause of the bloody conflict that had taken place, by the challenge which he gave in the morning near the Pool of Gibeon.

Joab was ready to close the contest, and ordered the signal-trumpet to be sounded, which summoned his troops to withdraw. They took up the line of march for Mahanaim. The evening shadows were now creeping over the great wilderness that surrounded the weary travellers; and the beams of the brightening stars were reflected from sword and spear of the retreating host. Over the Jordan, and through the deep forests, the troops went gloomily forward, until the light



of a new day shone upon their entrance into the royal city.

At break of the same day Joab's troops defiled through the streets of Hebron towards the palace of David, having lost only twenty of their number, and Abner three hundred and sixty men.

Asahel's body was taken to Bethlehem, and buried in the sepulchre of his father.

For about five years after the battle of Gibeon there were frequent collisions between the hostile forces of David and Ish-bosheth. But, from the mere allusions to these, it is evident that no great battles were fought. David, unwilling to slaughter his own people, seems to have let his rival alone, with the exception of these skirmishes; meanwhile, augmenting his own power, and waiting for the developments of Providence. We may safely challenge the sceptic, who makes scornful mirth over the sins of David, to find in all ancient history another instance of military defence more ably managed along with so sacred a regard to the lives of hostile countrymen.

It is only necessary to read the annals of



the age in which he reigned, to see the elevated spirit of this gifted ruler in the war with the house of Saul.

A quarrel between Abner and Ish-bosheth, it will be remembered, at length closed the rival king's career, cost Abner his life, and established the undisputed reign of David in Palestine.

The question of Abner, "Shall the sword devour forever?" still rings over sanguinary battle-fields in every land. The sword does devour unceasingly. Its havoc has reached nearly all of our American homes, and is darkening almost daily domestic altars of the Old World.

Yes, it shall cease to devour; for God has declared it. The resplendent morning is on the wing when the last contest shall have reddened the earth, and the weapons of war shall be converted into the peaceful implements of husbandry.

Christ assures us that to be angry without cause — in other words, in a passion — is murder. Because this spirit of revenge seeks to destroy, or at least harm, the object of hate. But in a defensive war, waged to protect



divinely-given rights, there need not be in the heart any malice or anger. The prayerful soul may enter the smoke of battle, without the fear either to meet the foe, or to go to God from the dismal tumult.

War was justly regarded by the Orientals as a judgment from God. How like heavenly music floats the benediction of Jesus over the discord of human passions: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."



### CHAPTER III.

BATTLES WITH THE JEBUSITES, THE PHILISTINES, THE MOABITES, THE SYRIANS, THE EDMITES, AND THE AMALEKITES.



THE Hebrew king, upon his attainment of universal sovereignty over Israel, saw that conquest by his arms, and a new, more central, and strongly fortified capital, would greatly increase his influence among the surrounding nations.

A campaign was immediately planned against Jebus, also called Jerusalem. David marched at the head of his army of three hundred and thirty-seven thousand men towards Mount Moriah, of sacred memory.

It must have been a stirring spectacle. Along the solitary highway, bordered with the palm and olive tree, the monarch led his host, armed with swords, javelins, slings, and



bows, twenty miles northward, to the gates of the coveted city.

It had resisted, successfully, repeated assaults, and the inhabitants felt perfectly secure. To make mirth of the besiegers, they sent the lame and blind to the walls with the taunting message to the Hebrews, that these defenders of the town must first be subdued before it could be taken. The crippled and sightless Jebusites were true to their masters, and defied with insulting words the army of David. The contempt poured upon him and his troops stung his spirit, and he issued the following proclamation: "Whosoever getteth up to the gutter and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be the chief and captain." The word "hated" expressed the strong indignation of the insulted king.

Joab had no idea of being supplanted by any other hero of the host, and immediately selected his "forlorn hope," and dashed over the moat, and gained an entrance into Jebus. The besiegers poured into the stronghold, and it fell. David spared the subjugated inhab-



itants, — a fact which alone vindicates his character from the charge of wanton cruelty.

The Jebusites had really no right to the city; it belonged to the promised inheritance of Israel, and was defiled with their idolatries. David "hated" the pagans as such, and not with the malice of a cruel nature, or of a personal enemy.

His treatment of these heathen does not approach the crimes of this republic in its treacherous and sanguinary dealings with the Indian tribes, who once were the only inhabitants of America. Their wrongs cry to Heaven continually for vengeance. And yet men will scoff at David for his warfare upon heathen neighbors, who will glory in the darker annals of the most Christian nation on the earth. And God everywhere, in his Word and by his providence, teaches us, that, although he has no pleasure in the sufferings and death of man or animal, the duration of the life of either, is of small importance compared with the general progress and redemption of the human race.

He permits the wages of sin to be paid to the guilty, and war, pestilence, and famine to waste whole kingdoms. To the complaining



and unbelieving, his message comes with awful authority: "Be still, and know that I am God."

David had scarcely repaired and improved his new metropolis, before he heard tidings of war from the land of the Philistines. The people who had befriended the exile now began to dread the monarch's extending sway, and determined to strike a weakening blow before he had time to increase his means of defence. They swarmed in battle-array into the valley of Rephaim, lying south-west of Jerusalem, on the right of the road to Bethlehem. In this region had dwelt the ancient inhabitants of Palestine, bearing the same name of the valley, and also called the "sons of Anak," and "giants."

David was evidently alarmed, on account of his partial preparation for a battle of such magnitude, and went with his troops to his old fortress, the stronghold near Bethlehem. There he inquired, through his priest, of the Lord what he should do — whether he should go with his inferior force against the enemy, or seek terms of peace. Jehovah was ready to defend his trusting servant, and punish



his idolatrous enemies; therefore he commanded the king to put his troops in order of battle.

The men of war were marshalled, and, animated by the king's assurance of the Lord's promised aid, advanced valiantly upon the enemy. Both sides were in fearful earnest; for it was the first meeting on the plains of battle of that powerful pagan people with the forces of the new monarch, whom, before his coronation, they had protected. If now the Philistines could conquer Israel, and sack Jerusalem, not far off, before its strong fortifications were completed, they would have little to fear any more from the Hebrews and their God. Their own deities were carried with the troops to secure the victory. The shock of assault deepened into desperate conflict, whose fortunes, for a brief period only, wavered. The lines of the heathen battalions gave way, and the wild shout of triumph from the victorious host rose over the retreating and broken ranks of the Philistines. Such were their panic and haste, they left their gods on the field, which were soon gathered into a burning pile, whose smoke went up to the bending sky, an offer-



ing to Him who had given his chosen the victory.

Very finely appears David's holy loyalty to God in his rejoicing. He said, "The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters." That is, as the waters break through mighty barriers, carrying them all away, so Jehovah had made the comparatively small army of Israel the tide of successful war upon the proud ranks of the enemy, and would complete the work begun. The king, "therefore, called the name of the place Baal-perazim" — *the master of breaches*.

The defeat deepened the apprehension of David's growing power; and, dissatisfied with this trial of military strength, the heathen host returned to the plains so recently red-dened with blood. When David heard of the repeated challenge, he sought again counsel of the Lord, and was bidden to accept it. A sign of the divine power was promised; it was a mysterious sound in the tops of the mulberry trees which grew along the line of his circuitous march.

How beautifully appears the loyalty of Da-



vid to God, and the absence of a mere lust of power, or desire for military glory!

When the strange music of God's victorious presence rose from the mulberry trees, David sounded the advance, and the Hebrew battalions rushed upon the foe. The rout of the Philistines was complete. The devout hero, rejoicing in God, returned to his throne. Although he gives no audible token of his nearness, the Lord does no less truly and clearly interpose in behalf of those who in time of trouble inquire of him. He is ever "*the rewarder* of them who diligently seek him." Not only in the commonest affairs of life will he make known his will, and deliver from doubts and fears, but in the more serious concerns of the soul—the spiritual conflicts whose victories lead to a crown, or rayless despair—the Savior-King never deserts those who meekly inquire of him and cheerfully obey his voice. The soldier of the cross shall come off "more than conqueror through Him who loved us and gave himself for us."

About four years later, when David had finished the fortifications of Jerusalem, and got his augmented army in good discipline, he



was commissioned to take the offensive against the Philistines, and recover the rights of Israel to promised possessions. The resistance of the disheartened foe was faint in contrast with the former aggressive wars.

The Hebrews moved upon Metheg-Ammah, the name of Gath and her towns. Its signification was *the bridle of Ammah*, because that chief city of the nation was situated in the mountain of Ammah, and alone had a king, and had also been the *curb* upon Israel to whose hand it was now transferred by conquest.

The conqueror then marched against Moab. It is true, this fierce people had been the refuge of Naomi in time of famine, and also of David's parents. But tradition says that the latter were slain by the Moabites, who were always the sworn and merciless foes of Israel. The favor shown David was simply to gratify this very hate, seeking revenge against Saul, the reigning king of the Hebrews.

God had expressly forbidden Israel to admit them into the congregation, or seek their peace and prosperity. Even the kindness which spared them upon the entrance into



Canaan was abused, and made the Moabites more insolent and revengeful.

The battles were evidently few and short along the triumphant path of David's troops. He overthrew their cities, leaving them smouldering heaps. The inhabitants were divided into three parts, the victor slaying two of these, to hopelessly weaken their power to harm him, and sparing the third to till the land.

There was no other way to obtain peace with such an enemy; and it is justified by all the usages of war, and the approval of God, according to Balaam's prophecy, "A sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab."

Hadadezer, a son of Rehob, king of Zobah, who held a part of the territory given to Israel beside the River Euphrates, next received David's notice, and offered a formidable opposition to his claim.

This prince could draw upon his father's military resources, and assembled an imposing army of cavalry, charioteers, and footmen.

The details of the conflict are not given — the clashing of swords, the storm of arrows



and of stones hurled by the slingers, and the work of the scythed chariots, whose blades on every hand were dripping with gore. When the wild echoes of victory sounded along the crimsoned tide of the Euphrates, David's banners were in the breeze; seven hundred companies of horsemen, of ten each, — making in all seven thousand, — twenty thousand infantry, and a thousand chariots, were the trophies of his arms.

The chariots were drawn by horses, two, and sometimes three, abreast. In them the warriors fought with bows and other weapons, not unfrequently running out upon the pole between the steeds, to their shoulders, to reach the enemy. Sometimes scythes were fastened to the axles, mowing down living men, as the charioteers drove furiously among them.

Chariots were of little service excepting on level land, and then were especially dreaded by the Hebrews before they were employed by them in battle.

The sinews of the captured horses' legs were cut, to make them useless for battle, excepting a sufficient number to draw a hun-



dred chariots. The maiming was attended with little pain, and, in the circumstances, was the quickest, safest, and least destructive method of disposing of the noblest animal in the service of man. It was not cruelty to deprive the enemy of the means of continued warfare. The measures necessary to make a repetition of the great American civil conflict impossible cannot be unjust and severe treatment of the excuseless authors of the bloody rebellion.

Scarcely had victory perched upon the standard of Israel before the battalions of a strange army were seen deploying into the plains of death.

From queenly Damascus came fresh troops to retrieve, if possible, the fortunes of the disastrous day to the Syrian prince.

The signal of battle soon sounded along the lines of Israel, and the two armies closed in deadlier conflict than before. But David's ensign once more floated over the tide of battle, before which the Damascene blade was borne backward in the powerless hand that had wielded it so well. Twenty-two thousand of the Syrians fell in that decisive struggle, and



left the Hebrew leader master of the field and the region represented by the foe. He garrisoned the splendid city and country which he had conquered.

David received gifts of gold and silver from the subjugated people, to which he added the massive shields of gold borne by the servants of Hadadezer, and also carried to Jerusalem "exceeding much brass." He dedicated these treasures to the Lord, for the grand temple his son would build.

The conquering king, having scattered garrisons over all the region, including rocky Edom, returned to his capital crowned with military honors, with his proud preëminence among reigning sovereigns acknowledged by them all. And better still, the special care of Jehovah is mentioned as the cause of his prosperity.

In these material conflicts he had deeply and sweetly learned what Paul felt in his warfare with the powers of darkness, and that of the whole church of Christ — "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

After a few years' interval of peace, there was an unlooked-for and a very singular oc-



casion for hostilities with another powerful heathen nation, to whom David was indebted for acts of kindness.

Nahash the king died, and his son Hanun ascended the throne. David, in grateful recollection of his father's magnanimous courtesy, resolved to send his royal sympathy and condolence to the new sovereign.

Ambassadors were despatched to the court of Hanun, bearing the sincere interest of David in the afflicted prince. They waited upon the monarch, who listened kindly to their expressions of sorrow from the palace at Jerusalem. But his princes were either foolishly or maliciously suspicious of the strangers, and determined to prejudice Hanun against them. Their words of jealousy were a sudden alarm to the grieving monarch. They said, "Thinkest thou that David doth honor thy father, that he hath sent comforters to thee? Hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?"

Hanun's passions were fired by the suggestion, and he rashly decided to brand with deepest disgrace the fancied treachery. His



princes goaded him on. Plotting mischief themselves, they were quick to dread it when there was no ground whatever for their fears. Hanun took an effectual mode of showing his resentment. He ordered one half of the beard of each ambassador to be shaven off, and their garments to be cut off in the middle, and in this ridiculous and indecent plight sent them back to David.

“The wearing of long beards and long garments was at that time, as it is still in the East, a mark of personal dignity. The beard especially was held in great veneration; and to cut it off was considered matter of the deepest reproach, and often as deserving the severest punishment. No greater insult could one king offer to another than Hanun did to David.”

Hearing of the treatment which his ambassadors had received, who, in their mortification, refused to return home, David sent messengers directing them to remain at Jericho, comparatively a retired town, till their beards were grown. While deliberating upon the means of vindicating the nation's honor, the Ammonites decided the question. They anticipated the inevitable appeal to arms, and



prepared for the field of death, where their contempt would be wiped out in blood, or be sustained by its fearful seal. To provide for the tremendous struggle, the Ammonites looked abroad for help.

The Syrians were requested to furnish troops. Their country lay between the River Euphrates and the Mediterranean Sea. Their great empire was divided into several kingdoms. Of these, Beth-rehob and Zobah contributed twenty thousand troops, Ish-tob twelve thousand, and Maacah a thousand. There were thirty-two thousand chariots of war.

David gave the command of his forces to his tried general, Joab. This brave officer led a large army to the field, near Medeba, a city on the east side of Jordan, and in the tribe of Reuben.

The Ammonites were under the walls of the city, and the Syrians a little distance away by themselves. This disposition of the troops was evidently designed to entrap Joab, and was a success. The chieftain of Israel moved upon the foe, whose proud advance was a challenge to enter the arena of decisive con-



flict. Suddenly he was startled to find himself between the two armies, ready to be crushed by the "upper and nether millstone" pressing upon his battalions.

The emergency brought out Joab's unequalled ability in the conduct of war. He selected the "chosen men of Israel" — the veteran and most valiant soldiers — and prepared to move upon the Syrian front. The rest of the troops were put under the command of his brother, Abishai, to watch the Ammonites, who had given the post of honor, that is, the opening onset, to the Syrians. Joab's order to Abishai gives the whole plan of battle.

"If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."

Joab was a bright example of the heroism he commended, and inspired his troops by it. They followed him with a charge which swept the Syrians from the field. The retreat was



the signal for Abishai's advance upon the Ammonites, who, catching the panic of their allies, in turn fled before his impetuous battalions.

Content with the victory, Joab did not pursue the fugitives, but led his army back to Jerusalem. This magnanimity was misapprehended. The Syrians, in their mortified pride, believing with the Ammonites that Joab's conduct was the expression of cowardice, again entered the arena of war at the call of Hadarezer, whose commander-in-chief was Shobach.

David saw that the impending struggle was to be a great and decisive one. Leaving his throne, he assumed command of Israel's grand army, and marched eastward over the Jordan towards the Euphrates. A glance at the map will show the reader the general direction he must have taken to reach the enemy's country, lying between Judea and the latter stream, emptying into the Persian Gulf. This military cavalcade was doubtless the finest that had ever left Judea's capital. At Helam, situated, it is supposed, on the banks of the Euphrates, the hostile armies met. The Syrians were prepared for the advancing legions of Israel, their array of cavalry and charioteers

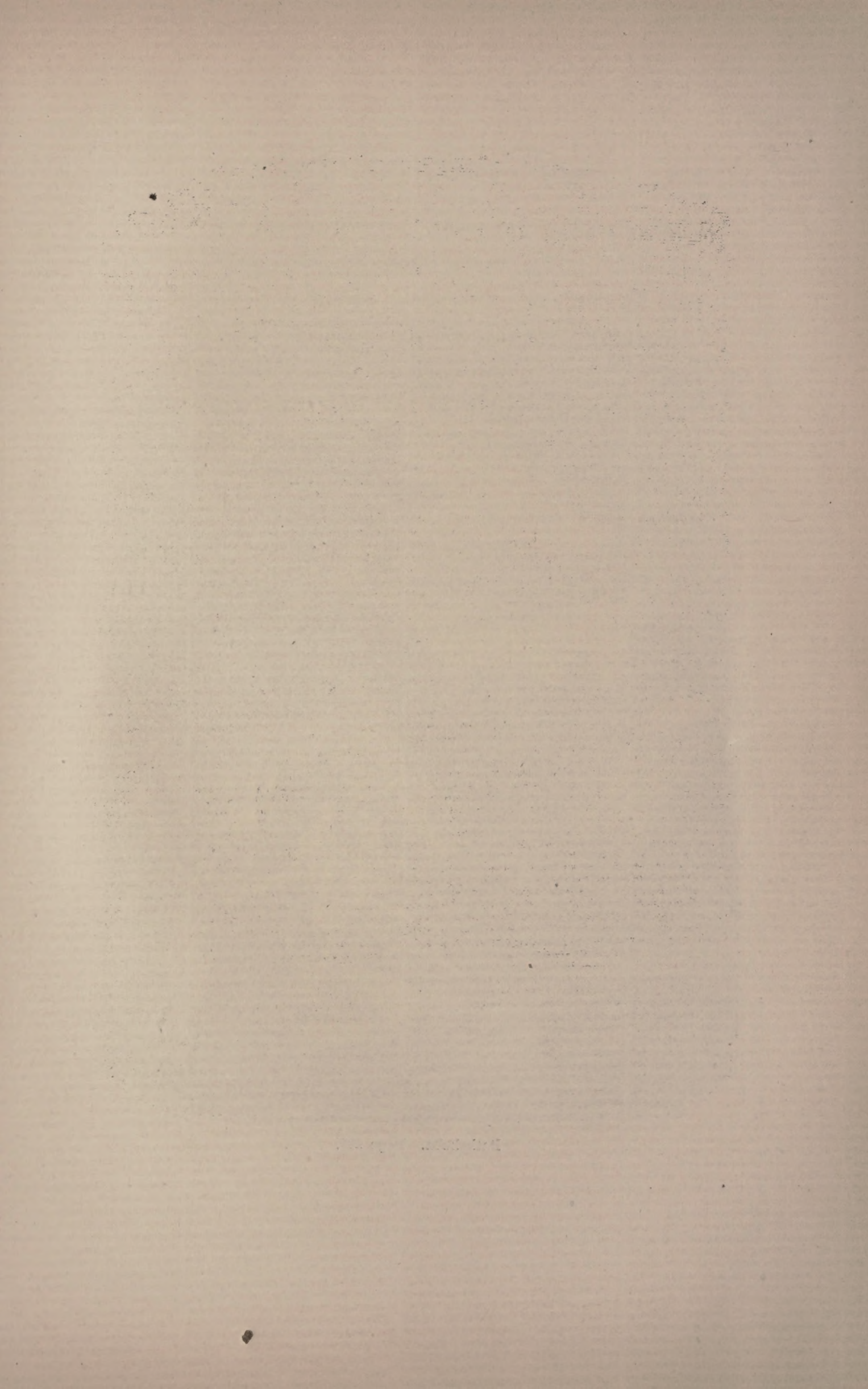


presenting a splendid and formidable front. David ordered the attack; and the clash of numberless weapons, and the sound of rushing chariots, were the quick response. The form of the Hebrew king was conspicuous among the surging ranks of his gallant host, smiting with his own hand Shobach, the general-in-chief of the enemy's troops. Seven hundred charioteers went down in the slaughter, and forty thousand horsemen. The sanguinary defeat satisfied the ambitious Syrians; they gladly accepted terms of peace, becoming tributary to David, and leaving the Ammonites to their fate.

The winter months suspended active operations in the field. With the advent of spring, when troops break camp, and campaigns are carried forward, David committed the further subjection of the Ammonites to Joab, and remained himself in his palace, — a preference of luxurious ease in his elation over the brilliant successes of his arms, that brought the darkest shadow of fatal temptation upon his life.

Joab was equal to the command, and moved immediately upon Rabbah, the principal city









Bathsheba. Page 203.



of the Ammonites. The town was strongly fortified, and refused to surrender. The result was a siege. Around the doomed city lay the troops of David under his brave general, while the ancient enemy of God and man was beleaguering the unguarded spirit of the distant king. He was now about fifty years of age, and on the summit of heroic fame. His word was law, and to declare a wish was to secure its gratification; and he ceased to feel his own littleness and weakness before God.

One day, in the warm spring-time, he rose from his noonday repose upon the flat roof of his palace, and saw below, engaged in her ablutions, the beautiful wife of a brave officer in his army. The hero was a Hittite — descended from an old pagan tribe of Palestine. The monarch was conquered by unholy passion, and sent to inquire who the object of his admiration was. When he learned the facts, he still yielded to the tempter; then sought to hide his sin by sending for the husband of Bathsheba. But in his noble patriotism and soldierly pride he refused to seek rest in his dwelling, preferring to defend the honor of his sovereign amid the hardships of war.



David resolved to have the brave man exposed to the greatest perils of the siege, that he might be slain, and his wife be made a member of the royal family, added to those he had already married.

Joab was apprised of the king's wishes, and soon gave Uriah such a post of honor, in one of the assaults upon the walls of Rillah, that he fell by the arrows of the enemy.

The pliant, ambitious Joab immediately sent a messenger to Jerusalem with the tidings. The shrewd commander clothed the despatch in words that would not implicate him, neither the king : —

"When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, and if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? Knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech, the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? Why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

Having received this message, David sent



back word to Joab, "Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it; and encourage thou him."

Bathsheba, after the usual days of mourning, became the wife of David. While their attachment to each other was thus sincere and deep, neither of them showed the least appreciation of their guilt before God; neither dreamed of the retributive bolts ready to fall upon them from his hand.

Jehovah commissioned the faithful and fearless prophet Nathan to declare his deep displeasure, and disciplinary judgments to come. The curtain of fancied secrecy was to be drawn aside, as it will be at length, from all iniquity, and the hideousness of the royal sin hold the transgressor's undiverted gaze.

Nathan's method of reproof was designed to make the king pronounce his own sentence of condemnation. He sought the palace, apparently in behalf of injured innocence, to secure the monarch's interposition; and most beautifully, and yet unsparingly, did the man of God thus deal with the transgressor. The



touching story was soon told: "There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drink of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him."

David's anger was kindled. He declared that the wealthy robber was worthy of death. "He shall restore the lamb fourfold," said he, "because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

Little did he anticipate the denunciation that now burst upon him. "Thou art the man!" exclaimed the prophet, accompanying the charge with a fearful message in the name of Jehovah. "Thus saith the Lord God of





"Thou art the man." Page 206.







Israel," was its solemn introduction, followed by a declaration of the favors which David had experienced at the hand of the Almighty, especially in being delivered from the malice of Saul, and constituted king in his stead, with an assurance that other blessings, had they been needed, would have been bestowed upon him. "Wherefore," continued Nathan, "hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon."

The most terrible judgments were then denounced against the trembling, conscience-stricken king; they would fall upon himself and his family, and involve him in the severest domestic trials and disgrace. "Thou didst it secretly," was the conclusion of the appalling message; "but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

This divine message was not lost upon the king. It touched his heart. It brought him to reflection and to penitence for his guilt. "I have sinned against the Lord," burst forth



from his lips. He could say no more. It was enough to show the sincerity and the depth of his repentance. The prophet saw that it proceeded from a broken and a contrite heart. He was authorized, in the name of his Master, to pronounce pardon on the offender. "The Lord also hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die." The death of the body, the temporal punishment, which David had incurred by his aggravated sin, should not be inflicted upon him, nor should he be doomed to that more terrible penalty of God's violated law, the second death — the eternal loss of his soul. So full of mercy is that Being, against whom we have all sinned, to the truly penitent.

"Howbeit," said the prophet at parting, "because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." This threatening soon began to take effect. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick." The tender father poured out his supplications before God in its behalf. He fasted, and, in the agony of his distress, lay all night upon the earth. Some of his



attendants tried to comfort him, and persuade him to rise and take nourishment, but in vain. On the seventh day the child died. David still remained in his retirement, tremblingly awaiting the result. His servants feared to let him know it. "Behold," said they, "while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself if we tell him that the child is dead?"

But David saw, by their whispering to each other, that Death had done his work, and inquired if it were not so. Upon receiving the assurance, he bowed in calm submission to the will of God. He rose from the earth, and having washed and anointed himself and changed his apparel, he went to the house of the Lord, and there publicly engaged in solemn acts of religious worship; after which, returning to his own dwelling, he partook of the food that was set before him, to show that his fasting and weeping were now at an end. His servants were surprised, and inquired how it was that he fasted and wept while the child was yet alive, but that when it was dead he arose and did eat bread.



"While the child was yet alive," he replied, "I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

The conquering hero, overcome a few months before by temptation, is now subdued in child-like penitence and resignation at Jehovah's feet. And who of us, when we reflect upon the past in which David lived, and our present, can declare that in the heart, if not openly, there has not been cherished greater sin? For by God "actions are weighed," not only, but the "thoughts and intents of the heart," which form character and shape deeds.

While the scenes of criminal affection, and bereavement, and repentance, were making a new chapter of history in the palace, Joab was pressing successfully the siege of Rabbah. He had made a breach in the walls, cut off the city from its conduits of water, and had driven the king to an impregnable fortress. At this crisis he sent for his monarch. The



message was another illustration of the general's tact and cunning in courting his sovereign's favor. He urged the presence of David, lest he should take the city alone, and give his own name to it, thus cheating the king out of the honor.

The Hebrew sovereign again took the field, with all the picked men of war not already there, and marched upon Rabbah. Joining Joab's troops, a united assault was made, and the overthrow of the town completed. Then the sacking and retributive cruelties of the age followed. It is true the Ammonites had insulted, in the highest degree, David's ambassadors, and brought on a bloody war; still we can see no sufficient excuse for putting the prisoners of war under saws and harrows, and burning others in brick-kilns. But this was done, not alone to punish the savage enemies of Israel, but to spread a terror which should impress with his might the foes of the king, and prevent further bloshed.

It is strange, however, that no word of condemnation is written in the Scriptures of the fearful work. The Ammonites were a fierce people, and David knew, had victory



been theirs, all that punishment, and more, would have filled Palestine with mourning.

We must leave the exact estimate of these deeds of horror to Him before whom, "at the end of the world," there will be no confusion in the testimony for or against the arraigned, no false charity, and no proud severity of judgment. David took for his own brow the conquered king's crown of gold and precious stones, with an immense amount of spoil for his grand army. The triumphal march was made to Jerusalem with flying banners, shouts of rejoicing echoing along the way, and processions of the people who remained at home, greeting the magnificent cavalcade.

What strange transitions in that ancient life of a king! A conqueror, then a sinning monarch, a weeper, a mourner, a pardoned friend of God, and again a royal victor, — all within a few months.

We live faster at some periods, and even moments, of existence than at others, we all know. O, how much God can crowd into a brief time of thought, feeling, and suffering! What intense joy or woe are reserved for us in the "swellings of Jordan," and beyond!



## CHAPTER IV.

### CIVIL WAR, AND THE CLOSE OF DAVID'S MILITARY CAREER.



HE king was now compelled to face new dangers — to encounter the severest trial of his sovereignty, military strength, and faith in Jehovah.

The ancient enemy of God failed to destroy the youthful harper by the hands of the infatuated Saul, and to seduce his soul with the idolatries of those who protected him, and even to work his ruin by fearful and successful temptations to sin; but this last assault was the refinement of satanic cruelty. God's providential discipline permitted the overwhelming calamity, according to his declaration, that domestic afflictions would crown the retributive blows of his sovereign and paternal hand. Of six sons born in Hebron, Absalom was his idol. The mother of this



young man was the Syrian princess Maacha, who won the admiration and love of David while a refugee in the realm of Geshur. Of her little is recorded. Heathen in origin, she was poorly qualified in religious character, at least, to mould the destiny of the gifted Absalom. Born among the hills of Hebron, he breathed their bracing air, and climbed in childhood their verdant slopes, or leaped, like the wild chamois, from rock to rock, in the deep defiles. To parental eyes he was wondrously fair, and his waving ringlets wreathed the fingers of royalty when the sceptre was laid by, with thrilling prophecies of clustering honors for the noble brow they adorned. The light of his fine, impulsive soul, flashing from the full orbs beneath soft lashes, outshone the precious stones of the monarch's diadem, and the incense-breathing lamps of the palace at nightfall. The ruddy hue of his cheek was the ever-fresh and living bloom of the heart's paradise; and his elastic step sent echoes of fame and gladness far down the vale of the king's old age, when all other sounds would be growing faint upon his ear. But time did not linger around the



innocent life of the splendid boy, and youth matured. Absalom was a handsome, generous, fascinating, and reckless young man.

Indulged and flattered, he grew restive under parental control — the usual reward of a vain and partial affection. Gay and social, aspiring and unprincipled, he lived for pleasure and fame. His brothers, though less brilliant, were equally destitute of moral character. One of them fell in love with his half-sister, Tamar, and by a single unnatural crime, whose reaction was the most cruel abuse of his victim, so exasperated Absalom that he resolved to avenge the wanton deed. He waited two years, when, to attain the sanguinary object, he made a feast, on the occasion of sheep-shearing, and invited his father and his brethren.

The monarch refused to go, but reluctantly gave his consent to the attendance of Ammon, towards whom Absalom cherished his deadly hate.

The festive board was spread, and the cup of intoxication passed freely, until the victim of vengeance was helpless ; when, at Absalom's command, the assassins slew him. Terror-



smitten with his deed, Absalom fled into lonely exile.

The sudden and tragical close of the festival was followed by the startling rumor which reached the king, that all the princes but Absalom were dead. The palace was then a house of wildest mourning. The monarch lay upon the floor with rent robes and flowing tears, surrounded by his awe-struck and grieving attendants.

Jonadab at length dashed into the city, threw the reins of his mule to the hand of a servant, and entered excitedly the royal presence. He gave a true account of the fratricidal deed, and told his father that his brothers, excepting Ammon and the flying Absalom, were behind, on the way to the capital. Their arrival soon after increased the number of the mourners, whose lamentations filled the palace. David's sorrow was embittered by the connection between this murder and that of Uriah in the providential discipline, and the consciousness that indulgence had made Absalom passionate and reckless.

But time, which stays not for joy or grief, restored again the accustomed routine of roy-



alty, but left deep lines of anguish in the face of the chief mourner, and a shadow of abiding gloom in his soul-lit eye.

Three years passed over the self-exiled Absalom, and David began to feel his old love prevailing over his displeasure, and the longing to see his guilty boy was too strong for concealment.

The wise and watchful Joab saw that his opportunity to intercede for Absalom had come. He thought the punishment of the assassin had been sufficient, in view of the great provocation offered by the victim, and desired to see the brilliant young prince in the palace once more. He at once formed a plan of procedure which displayed the intellectual power of the chieftain. He knew a gifted, discreet, and attractive woman at Tekoah, a town in Judah, about twelve miles south of Jerusalem, and sent for her to advocate his cause before his sovereign. She was instructed to assume the character of a mourning widow, pleading for the life of her son. The successful interview with David revealed the artful plot.

The woman sought an audience with the



monarch, and, prostrating herself in the dust at his feet, cried out, "Help, O king!"

"What aileth thee?" inquired David, with condescending kindness.

"I am indeed a widow woman," she replied, "and my husband is dead. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them; but the one smote the other, and slew him. And behold, the whole family is risen against thy handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also. And so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth." She added that she had come to the king to be delivered from the destruction which she feared for herself and her son.

David's compassion was moved, and he told her to return home, while he would give orders to prevent the evils which she dreaded. But the woman seemed to desire a still stronger assurance from the king, and added, with great solemnity, "My lord, O king, the iniquity be



on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne be guiltless."

"Whosoever saith aught unto thee," rejoined the king, "bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more."

But this did not satisfy her. Immediate and decisive action was necessary. She appealed to the obligations which David was under to that God who had been so full of compassion towards him. "I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that thou wouldst not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son."

"As the Lord liveth," replied David, "there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth" — confirming what he had before promised with the solemnity of an oath, and thus satisfying the woman that she might now press the ultimate object which she had in view.

"Let thy handmaid," said she, "I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king."

"Say on," was the king's reply.

The woman then endeavored to convince him that he had reproved himself for the want of mercy towards Absalom by promis-



ing to protect her son who had killed his brother; and that to deny this mercy any longer to his own son was inflicting an injury upon the whole nation, whose desire was to see the offender restored to favor.

David now perceiving the drift of the woman, and suspecting who had sent her to him, inquired, "Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?"

She acknowledged that it was; adding, in the usual style of Oriental compliment, "My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth."

David was compelled to feel the application of his own pledges to the widow, as when Nathan pleaded for the owner of the ewe lamb, — whose case may have suggested to Joab's mind this similar method of producing conviction.

The woman of Tekoah won her suit, and the general whom she had served approached the king with grateful demonstrations of his joy, and sincere devotion to his sovereign. He then hastened to Geshur, where Absalom was, and escorted him to the capital. But





David reconciled to Absalom. Page 220.







here the gladness of both was suddenly checked. David commanded his erring son to retire to his own house, and not to appear in the presence of his father — thus expressing before all the people his deep abhorrence of the crime of Absalom.

We are left to conjecture how he passed the two years of his banishment from court-life; but we do know that he chafed against the restraint, and sent for the brave Joab, whose influence over the king was evidently greater than that of any other man in Israel, to intercede for him.

For some reason, no hint of which is given, the stern old commander did not notice the urgent request. Its repetition was equally unsuccessful. This indifference roused the untamed spirit of Absalom, and he determined to secure, cost what it might, an interview with Joab. He applied the torch to a field of barley belonging to the general, not far from his own residence, laying the golden grain in ashes. The smoke of the burning field gave the alarm, and the eager questioning of the owner was answered by the assurance that the returned refugee had kindled the flames.



He went immediately and indignantly to Absalom to learn the reason for the incendiary deed. The prince was ready to answer him: "Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? It had been good for me to have been there still. Now, therefore, let me see the king's face, and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me."

Joab, instead of resenting the injury, magnanimously complied with the request, and persuaded David to receive Absalom to court again. Once there, his wounded pride, his ambition, and his reckless daring urged him to stake everything in a game of conspiracy against the throne, to secure it for himself.

A very able and devout writer, we think, gives truly the circumstances that favored the conspiracy, in the language he puts upon the tongue of the fiend who is represented as making David's overthrow his special service.

"David's treatment of Uriah had given a tremendous blow to his reputation. Uriah was yet well remembered as the gallant and brave soldier who had been most cruelly sac-



rificed; and the matter was still talked of, through all the tribes of Israel, to David's disadvantage.

"The kingdom had now grown very large, and it was impossible for any one man to meet the expectations of all. There were complaints of neglect, and that justice was not punctually and promptly administered.

"There were still in the land many old adherents of the house of Saul, men who had been officers in his army, or in the state, during his administration. Many of these had been displaced when David came into power, and they and their families were not cordial.

"There were many restless persons, who were weary of what they styled *monotony*. These were glad to have a rebellion; some from the mere love of novelty and change; others, a large class, who had nothing to lose, and who hoped that a revolution might better their condition.

"David was now growing old; the infirmities of age were beginning to come upon him; and many were ready to pay their devotions rather to the rising than the setting sun.



"Absalom was the real heir to the crown, and many thought that by being forward in asserting his claims, they would ingratiate themselves with the new administration.

"Absalom possessed an engaging person, captivating manners, and well understood how to render himself prepossessing and popular.

"And last, but not least, Ahithophel, being wholly alienated from David, would throw all the weight of his talents and influence into the scale of Absalom."

Never was a guilty purpose more deliberately formed and firmly carried forward to its dread accomplishment than Absalom's. The young man's heart was thoroughly corrupted, and dead to filial obligation. The power of a saintly mother's influence and her prayers he had never known. He might have broken away from even these strongest, tenderest restraints of home, but when they have been enjoyed they are the last to yield to the assaults of temptation.

Every morning he stood by the city-gate saluting the strangers who came from the surrounding country, inquiring from what place they were, and their business. After these



conciliatory questions, he asked after their private grievances, expressing the deepest sympathy with those in trouble. Then he would add, with deep concern, "O that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath a suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" Sometimes the admiring Hebrews would return these attentions with the highest expressions of reverence, which he acknowledged in the most cordial manner. Thus he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel."

What melancholy ruin has been wrought by the lips of flattery! They beguiled the holy dwellers in Eden. No sinful weakness of humanity demands more careful and prayerful vigilance than this fondness for the notice and admiration of others, particularly of those who occupy a high position in society.

Absalom's plot was at length matured, and he was ready to strike a blow that would shake the kingdom, and spread paleness on the cheeks of its monarch.

He now asked permission of the king to go to Hebron, to perform there a religious vow



which he had made while in exile in Geshur, if the Lord would bring him back again to Jerusalem. The king, not suspecting the real object, consented, and bade him go in peace.

Before his departure he despatched messengers among the tribes, apprising them of the crisis in national affairs, and directing them to proclaim him king in Hebron when they heard the trumpet's signal blast. Two hundred attendants, who apparently did not understand his real design, escorted the prince.

From Hebron, Absalom sent to Giloh for Ahithophel, the master-politician of his time, the intelligent, shrewd, and influential counsellor of the king. He had become alienated from David, and was an admirer of the gifted conspirator.

The trumpet's signal of revolt sounded from ancient Hebron, and the response was, moving thousands on the way to join the standard of rebellion.

A courier dashed into Judah's capital, and hastened to the king. From his pallid lips burst the thrilling words, "Treason, my lord !



O king, treason ! The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom ! ”

The terrified monarch and tender father immediately decided to flee. He may have been opposed by the fearless Joab and his brave captains, but the fears of their sovereign, and his unwillingness to fight his own son and subjects, prevailed ; and the order to abandon Jerusalem was given : “ Arise, let us flee ; for we shall not else escape from Absalom : make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.” On their replying that they were ready to do whatever he should direct, he went forth, and all his household and people after him, excepting ten of his inferior wives, whom he left behind to take charge of the palace. His servants passed on, and then his body-guard of Cherethites and Pelethites, and six hundred Gittites from Gath, under the command of Ittai.

But David's magnanimity would not allow him to consent that these strangers, who had sought his protection, should be involved in his calamity. He expressed his wonder at



the sacrifice they were so ready to make, and directed Ittai to return with his followers to their own country, adding his parting blessing, "Mercy and truth be with thee."

Ittai was too generous and brave to comply. "As the Lord liveth," said he, "and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be." Such noble, devout language indicates that these heroic men of Gath were proselytes from paganism; perhaps through David's loyalty to God while there.

David ordered Iittai to keep on and cross the brook Kidron, which he did with all his men, and the little ones that were with him. After him the attendants of the king and the people passed over, filling the air with their lamentations. David himself came last, to see that all was safely and wisely arranged, and the sad procession moved on its way towards the wilderness.

Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, with the whole body of the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord, were among those who remained faithful to the king, and



had followed him when he left Jerusalem. As Abiathar stood to see the people pass over the brook Kidron, they set down the ark, and he ascended an eminence, gazing on the scene until the last of the throng had left the city. He could not think of leaving behind the symbol of Jehovah's presence. But the king would not peril the hallowed ark for any possible benefit to him in his flight, and said to Zadok, —

"Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

He added, "Art thou not a seer?" that is, a prophet and priest of God, who should remain and instruct the people. "Return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness until there come word from you to certify me."

Zadok and Abiathar carried back the ark to Jerusalem.



David and those who followed him now advanced farther on their way, and began to ascend Mount Olivet, whose brow Jesus, ages afterwards, baptized with his tears. He "wept as he went up, and had his head covered," as was customary with mourners, to show the depth of his sorrow, and for the same reason "he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up."

To augment his affliction, David was told of the defection of his counsellor Ahithophel, and that he was among the conspirators with Absalom. He knew the sagacity as well as the influence of this formidable man, and feeling that he must rely on the Almighty alone for protection against such a foe, he exclaimed, "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

On Olivet David bowed in prayer, and lifted to God the praise of his grieving heart. His supplication for divine mercy was answered immediately. Hushai the Archite a friend true to the last, came to him with rent robes and earth upon his head; a faith-



ful, devoted subject, mourning over the dethronement of his king. David saw in him the man he needed at the capital, and begged him to return, and defeat the crafty influence of Ahithophel, offering his services to Absalom for this very purpose. He went to Jerusalem.

Soon the prince, with his fine army, approached the city. It was a grand spectacle. The banners of the various tribes floated in the breeze, and acclamations filled the heavens above the handsome and exulting leader of the host.

The massive gates of Jerusalem swung on their hinges, and the magnificent cavalcade entered into the deserted metropolis, enthroning the successful traitor.

David continued his flight, and while descending the summit, was met by Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, with a present of refreshments for the fugitive king. With unutterable meanness he replied to the inquiry of David where his master was, that he was watching the tide of revolution, ready to join Absalom in his usurpation. The treacherous Ziba was believed, and the possessions of Mephibosheth promised him.



Although manliness is not religion, true godliness is manly and sincere; and the living Christian alone is secure from the easy, gradual descent to the basest selfishness.

David's sad march had reached Bahurim, a small town in the tribe of Benjamin, a mile or two from Jerusalem, when he was met by Shimei, a son of Gera. This man belonged to a class found in every community, who have no fixed principles of right living. He was vain and selfish. Supposing that David was overthrown, and Absalom the "coming man," he sought the distinction of an early and public change in his loyalty. In his self-conceit and contempt of the king, he threw stones at him and his escort, tauntingly exclaiming, —

"Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hands of Absalom, thy son; and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man."

Abishai, David's nephew, could not brook



the insult. "Why should this dead dog," he exclaimed, "curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head."

But David rebuked him. "Behold," said he, "my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day."

What a deep sense of the divine discipline, and sublime command over himself and his attendants, was shown by David in this conduct towards his bitter accuser! He was a follower of Him whom, "not having seen, he loved," and who bore uncomplainingly the reviling of his foes.

At Jerusalem momentous scenes were passing. Hushai had appeared before Absalom, who was suspicious of one who had been so true and devoted to David, and inquired, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest thou not with thy friend?"

Hushai replied, evasively, that whosoever the Lord and the people chose for the reign-



ing sovereign he should serve, and preferred now to be in the presence of David's son.

Soon after, Absalom called in his counselor, Ahithophel. What shall be the next move in the grand conspiracy, was the question of high debate. The unscrupulous Ahithophel suggested, that, to convince the people the die was cast, and no reconciliation between him and his father was possible, Absalom openly appropriate the wives left by his father in the palace. This was done by spreading the royal tent on the roof, and conducting the women into it — an unblushing but ready compliance with the advice of a thoroughly depraved heart.

It seemed strange that David should have trusted Ahithophel so long. But he proved himself wise in council, and concealed his own real character.

Another council followed, in which the political forecast of this dangerous man appeared. He urged the most prompt and decisive measures to complete the revolution. Rightly inferring that David was depressed by the unnatural rebellion of Absalom, already alarmingly successful, he proposed that



his new sovereign permit him to lead twelve thousand picked men against the sorrowful and weary exile, and crush the last vestige of opposing power by slaying him.

The prince, with his nobles, applauded the plan, — the last step in the march of bloody ambition, — and the order to march was on his lips, when he thought of the gifted and heroic Hushai, and sent for him. It was now Hushai's opportunity to serve David. He reverently saluted Absalom, and increased, by his whole bearing, the confidence already gained.

"The counsel that Ahithophel hath given," said he, "is not good at this time."

He then went on to say that Absalom well knew that his father and those who were with him were men of tried valor and mighty in battle; that they were enraged and desperate, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field; that it would be difficult for Ahithophel to find David, who was too wary to lodge with his men in their tents, and was probably concealed in some secure retreat; and that the pursuers after the king, meeting, as they doubtless would, with some discomfiture at the first attack, the slaughter of such would



strike terror into the rest. Thus he added, "He also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt; for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men.

"I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground; and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one." He further said, that should the king take refuge in a fortified city, Absalom's host could carry away the very stones of the walls.

The advice was suited to please the ambitious prince and his chief men, and was at once accepted. The reason is recorded: "For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom."

How far Hushai diverged from the divine



rule of truthfulness, we have no intimation. He had to answer to his Judge, who overruled his conduct to accomplish his gracious designs.

Hushai lost no time in getting the news to Zadok and Abiathar, the loyal priests, and seemed, after all, to fear that Absalom would change his mind; for he was urgent to have messengers despatched with haste to David, telling him not to stay in the plains of the wilderness that night, but cross the Jordan, and foil any attempt to overtake him. The true-hearted sons of the priests, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, feeling unsafe in the city, were concealed at En-rogel, also called the Fuller's Fountain, on the south-east side of Jerusalem, waiting for any command from the capital.

A maid-servant, some heroic young spirit, stole from her home, and cautiously picked her way to the hiding-place of Jonathan and Ahimaaz, and bore the tidings to them. They went forth to find the king. A lad saw them on their way, and carried the news to Jerusalem. Pursuit was ordered by Absalom, and fleet couriers dashed through the city gates.



The spies somehow suspected the result of the glimpse the boy had of them, and asked for concealment in a house at Bahurim.

The loyal woman there, directed them to a walled fountain, in which they found a foothold, and over whose mouth she spread a cloth covered with meal drying in the sun.

A few moments later the pursuers appeared in view, reined up, and inquired for the messengers. She pointed over the brook near, and said she saw them going in that direction. The rebels were soon out of sight, and the spies again on the road to David's camp.

The caravan at once was in motion, and did not pause in the hurried march until safely over the river. How they crossed we do not know; probably on foot at a ford there. The citizens of Mahanaim, which belonged to the Levites, situated on the stream Jabbok, which flows into the Jordan north of the Dead Sea, welcomed the tired fugitives, bringing forth all needed supplies. Good Barzillai, the Gileadite, furnished beds and the utensils of housekeeping, with abundance of food.

While David and his attendants were rest-



ing here, Ahithophel closed his guilty career.

When he found that his power over Absalom was gone, and Hushai, in whom he had no confidence, had supplanted him, his gray hairs shook with the storm of emotions that swept over his soul. He turned away despairingly, and hurried to his own house, where, having arranged his affairs, he soon swung in the air, a distorted suicide.

Suicide was declared by an eminent jurist to be confession of guilt by a criminal. If reason be not dethroned, or at least shaken, the fearful act always proclaims a soul burdened with some dark weight of sin.

God has made life dear, and death dreadful, unless it come to the pilgrim on his heavenward way.

How desperate the state of a sinner who strikes down his own existence, and rushes forth upon eternal scenes! Yet no man unrenewed can say what he may not do if left of God to the adversary of all good.

Absalom put the command of his splendid army under Amasa, the son of Abigail, his aunt, who married Jether, an Ishmaelite.



The silence respecting this brave man, until he appears thus conspicuously in the rebellion, gives us a glimpse of family history. The sons of another sister of David, Zeruiah, a superior woman, were promoted by him. Joab, Asahel, and Abishai were favorites of the king. But Amasa's father was a descendant of the outlaw Ishmael, and was therefore neglected. The effect upon him naturally soured his feelings towards his sovereign, and he gladly linked his fortunes with the more artful, attentive Absalom.

Amasa led his exultant battalions with flying ensigns from the walls of Jerusalem, in pursuit of David. The usurper had learned where his father was, and directed his general to march on Mahanaim. Upon his approach the distressed monarch saw that hopeless flight or a battle was inevitable. There lay in full view from the walls of the city the long lines of Absalom's mighty host, while around him were brave men impatient to meet the enemy. But in the king's heart was a third party, whose decision might settle the question of combat or surrender by flight, — it was a *father's yearning love*.



The officers urged a brave defence, and the self-command of the king and conqueror rose to the great occasion. He ascertained the number of effective men on whom he could rely, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them, dividing the whole into three parts. At the head of the first division he placed his able general Joab. Abishai, the brother of Joab, — both of whom, it will be recollected, were nephews of the king, — commanded the second; while the third was under Ittai the Gittite.

David resolved to take the field in person, but his devoted, heroic leaders sternly expostulated with him. They said, "Thou shalt not go forth, for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us; but now thou art worth ten thousand of us; therefore now it is better that thou succor us out of the city."

David yielded to the noble appeal, and took a position by the gate of Mahanaim, where he could have a good view of his troops as they marched past him. He encouraged the heroes, who loved their ruler and were ready to die for him, with his old familiar words of



cheer when on the eve of battle. But he had another object nearer than their success to his heart; it was the life of his wayward Absalom. And when Joab, with majestic bearing and compressed lips, approached, he said tearfully, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man." In the ear of the scarcely less commanding form of Abishai he repeated the tender caution. Then Ittai, the converted Gittite, the faithful ally, bowed his head to hear the same words of parental solicitude.

At length the army swept by, and the division of the king, for whom it went to the conflict, followed the receding ranks; Absalom, with all his guilt, was dearer to him than his throne.

According to Joab's plan of battle, the two armies met on the borders of the forest of Ephraim. This gave him, with his greatly inferior force, an advantage over his foe; for if he could hem him in and surround him, his destruction would be easy. The advance was sounded, and the contest opened fiercely. Joab stood like Gibraltar amid the waves, his clear eye surveying the closing ranks, while above the braying of trumpets and clash of



arms rose the shout of Absalom cheering on his rebel legions. The burnished blades drank blood, and the groans of the dying filled the air. At length the lines of Absalom's army began to yield to the fiery valor of the king's warriors. They were forced back into the forest, and cut down like grain before the sickle.

Absalom saw that the day was lost, and turned the head of his fleet mule into the woods. But, as he was galloping under an oak, his hair caught on a knotty branch, and, stripping him from his mule, left him dangling in mid-heaven.

A man, who saw Absalom hanging from the bough of the oak, ran and told Joab of it. "Why didst thou not smite him to the ground?" he exclaimed; "and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle."

"Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand," was the reply, "yet would I not put forth my hand against the king's son; for, in our hearing, the king charged thee, and Abishai, and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom." To this he added, that had he killed Absalom, he would himself have been ex-



posed to lose his life; for the king would soon have heard of the deed, and even Joab would have been ready to bring the offender to punishment.

Joab's answer was short and hurried — "I may not tarry with thee."

Absalom strove to reach the limb and extricate himself, but in vain. Suddenly, upon his ear fell the sound of Joab's approach. What a fearful moment to the helpless traitor! He knew the stern Joab, and expected to die. We doubt not that the victorious chief paused a moment, while the thrilling words, "Deal gently with the young man for my sake," rang back in memory. Then the crime of the captive and the tremendous crisis to the country overcame his hesitation. He drew a javelin, and hurled it into that manly form, and again the second time, and still a third.

To make sure work with the conspirator, he commanded ten men who bore his armor, to pierce him with their weapons. The bleeding body, just before so princely, and swayed by martial enthusiasm, was then thrown into a pit, and covered with stones. Such was the terrible close of a rebellious son's career.





Absalom slain. 244.







The example stands in the far past, a beacon of solemn warning to the end of time against the sin so thankless and so hateful to God — contempt of parental authority and affection.

Joab felt that to "make treason odious" and his sovereign's throne secure, this reckless leader of the revolt must die.

The struggle was over, and twenty thousand of Absalom's troops strewed the red field. The rest fled to their homes. Joab blew the trumpet to recall the pursuing troops. But who shall carry the tidings of victory to David, which will also announce the death of his boy? Ahimaaz volunteered; but he had been a bearer of more grateful despatches to the king, and Joab declined to let him convey news unwelcome to his sovereign and prejudicial to himself. Cushi was despatched, and while he hurried away, Ahimaaz again asked permission to go, which was granted. He outran Cushi, and was the first to reach the suburbs of Mahanaim.

David was waiting between the gates for some messenger or fugitive from the scene of conflict. A watchman, from the roof over the gate, shouted to the king, that he



saw a man in the distance running towards the city. David replied, "If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth;" in other words, in that case he was undoubtedly a courier from the army.

Soon Cushie came in sight, and the watchman told David that another man was running alone across the plain. The king said, "He also bringeth tidings."

When Ahimaaz was recognized, David added, "He is a good man, and bringeth good tidings." Approaching the gate, he cried out, "All is well." In another moment he was ushered into the royal presence, and bowing to the ground, he exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king."

David asked again, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

Ahimaaz evaded the question: "When Joab sent the king's servant and me, thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was."

"Turn aside," answered the king, "and stand here."



Cushi came. "Tidings," said he, "my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee."

"*Is the young man Absalom safe?*" burst from the tremulous lips of David.

Cushi's answer was a model of tact and delicacy in the announcement of heavy tidings: "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is."

The monarch needed no further details; he knew that Absalom was dead. The *effect* of this assurance is recorded in words of unrivalled beauty and pathos: "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

A little later and the bannered host of victory sent their glad shouts over the city, and the echoes of their march through the city gates. Suddenly the voices of joy die away, the banners droop, and gloom spreads over the faces of the heroic men. The overwhelm-



ing grief of the king has been told along the lines, and his lamentation is heard, sounding from the room where he weeps. With covered face he sobbed, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The troops entered the city "as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle."

Joab was indignant, in view of the great interests at stake, and the signal deliverance the Lord had wrought. He complained of the king's unreasonable indifference to everything but Absalom's fate, and added, "Now, therefore, arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth there will not tarry one with thee this night; and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now."

David was not ignorant of the value of Joab's services to him, nor of his great popularity with the army; nor was he indifferent in regard to his crown and kingdom. He did not venture, therefore, to resent the reproof of Joab, nor touch the slayer of Absalom. But he took his seat in the gate of the city, where justice was administered, that the peo-



ple might once more see their king, and offer him their congratulations.

With the spreading news of the victory among the tribes came a reaction in the public feeling. David's heroism and unequalled sovereignty, and his kindness to Absalom, in contrast with the traitor's unfilial conduct, subdued all hearts in the calm moments of reflection, and they desired to see him again upon the throne. He improved the changed condition of things, and sent the following message to the men of Judah at Jerusalem, who were apparently the most reluctant to move for the restoration: "Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh; wherefore are ye the last to bring back the king?"

He sent word to Zadok and Abiathar to offer Amasa, if he would return to his loyalty, the post of honor occupied by Joab. The reasons for this are clear: Joab had killed Absalom, while Amasa had been neglected. The appeals of the exiled king "bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man." They invited him to return to his capital and throne. When the royal procession reached the Jordan, the men



of Judah, who had assembled for the purpose, were on the opposite bank to conduct him over the river.

The stream was soon covered with the rafts which bore the procession across the waters. At this moment the time-serving Shimei appeared, with a thousand men of his tribe, confessing his former abuse, to David, and begging for pardon; reminding his king that he was the first of the tribes of Israel to congratulate his victorious monarch. Abishai's nobler heart glowed with resentment at such hypocrisy, and demanded Shimei's death.

David was too magnanimous to seek this poor revenge, and reproved both him and his brother Joab, in the following language: "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?" Then turning to Shimei, and calling upon God to witness the sincerity of the declaration, he pronounced his pardon by saying, "Thou shalt not die."

Ziba, the slanderer of Mephibosheth, with



his fifteen sons and twenty servants, followed in a similar suit for the king's clemency. Next came the venerable and excellent Barzillai, who declined the invitation to become a member of the royal household at Jerusalem, preferring to die in his own city, and be buried by his father and mother. He recommended to David, Chimham, probably his son, whom David gladly took with him.

At Gilgal, people from other tribes joined the cavalcade. After some complaint from the men of Israel against Judah for the prominent part they had taken in the king's return, to which the latter replied with conciliatory allusions to David's relation to them, the disaffection of Israel was very great. The restless, angry elements had a waiting leader. Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, blew the trumpet of revolt, and cried out, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel."

Israel followed Sheba, and David returned with Judah, to Jerusalem. He was met by the injured Mephibosheth, and an explanation of his course, as misrepresented by his ser-



vant, was made, and he was received into the favor of the king, who restored to him, in part, his possessions.

This providential vindication of Jonathan's son is another illustration of the impossibility of ultimate success in wrong-doing. Absalom, Shimei, and Ziba bitterly learned the truth of God's declaration, "Be sure your sins will find you out."

As soon as David was enthroned in his capital, he removed to the seclusion of widowhood the wives appropriated by Absalom.

He then entered, with all his regal and military power, upon the work of subduing Sheba's rebellion. He ordered Amasa to assemble Judah's men of war within three days at the capital. His delay excited David's fears that Sheba might rival Absalom; and he sent Abishai with Joab's old heroes, the Cherethites and Pelethites, and all the men of war within the city, to find and join Amasa. They did so at the rock Gibeon. Joab was, with the army, true to David, and watching the course of events. The presence of Amasa, calling out his own brave veterans, was too much for Joab's wounded spirit, and, tak-



ing the new commander by his beard with his right hand, as if to kiss him, with his left he drew his sword and slew him. Joab then took his former place at the head of the army, and, with Abishai under him, went in pursuit of Sheba.

The bloody corpse attracted the attention of the passing men, when a friend of Joab shouted, "He that favoreth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab!" To turn the attention of the gathering and horror-smitten crowd from the slain Ishmaelite to their former general, a soldier removed the body from the highway and covered it with cloth.

Sheba had gone through the tribes stirring up rebellion, and was overtaken by Joab at Beth-maachah, a city in Northern Palestine. The town was besieged. A distinguished, intelligent woman called to Joab to know why he sought to destroy the venerable and worthy city. He replied he only wanted the rebel Sheba.

The woman answered him that she would have his head thrown over the wall. She went to the authorities of the city, and told



them the price of their deliverance from the beleaguering army. Soon after she saw the gory head passing over the city wall. Joab withdrew his troops and returned to Jerusalem.

David was once more established in his kingdom. Joab was at the head of the army; Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and Pelethites; Adoram was over the tribute; Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, was recorder; Sheva was scribe; Zadok and Abiathar were the priests, and Ira the Jairite was a chief ruler.

God had given to Israel and to the world the highest testimony to the truth of his own declaration, that, while he was erring, David was still a man after his own heart, illustrating that other truth of his Word, that single acts do not always represent character. A gale may sweep the surface of the waters against the tide; it is the strong and steady under-current that reveals the direction and destination of the stream.

The last wars of David mentioned in the Bible were with his old enemies, the Philistines. Some distinguished expositors think





Beheading of Sheba. Page 254.







they belong to an earlier period of his reign, and are recorded after the narrative of his fall, to make the history of his sin and the punishments which followed more connected. Two of the reasons assigned for this view are, that the king had effectually subdued those pagans, and that his age was too far advanced for martial deeds.

On the other hand, it was quite natural that his foes should take advantage of this very thing, encouraged by the weakening effect of the civil wars upon the army, in contrast with their own, led by its fresh and mighty champions.

The Philistines appeared on some of their former battle-fields, and fought with great gallantry. For the struggle went on until David "waxed faint" — his strength began to fail him. At this critical moment, Ishbi-benob, an armed giant, advanced upon the weary monarch. The valiant Abishai was near, and, seeing his sovereign's danger, rushed between him and the champion, and smote down the Philistine. The body-guard of David gathered around him, and declared that he should not again lead the troops into battle, assign-



ing, in poetical language, their reason, — “that thou quench not the light of Israel.” The loyal warriors trembled before the peril their noble and venerable king had just passed; they seemed to stand under the shadow of the awful eclipse of the nation’s glory his death would have made.

Not long after this engagement, there was another at Gob, near Gezer, in which Sibbechai, one of David’s “valiant men,” who is particularly mentioned, slew Saph, or Sippai, another giant, and brother of Ishbi-benob. Subsequently there was at this place a second battle, and Elhanan, a Bethlehemite, also a distinguished warrior, killed a brother of Goliath.

Still later, there was a fight at Gath. Jonathan, David’s nephew, added fresh laurels to those he had already won, by killing a giant whose hands had six fingers each, and his feet the same number of toes. Like Goliath, who fell before the son of Jesse, he “defied Israel.” Thus David’s wars with the Philistines began by the slaughter of a champion who poured contempt upon the God of Israel, and ended with the death of a similar haughty and



insulting pagan at the hand of a near relative and brave officer in his vast army.

We have in the sacred annals of royal warfare David's roll of honor,—a list of his principal heroes, and their gallant exploits. Some of the latter have already been noticed.

The brief record is exceedingly suggestive, indicating, by the mere glimpses of brave achievements it affords, the rare material of which his splendid army was made, and the many deeds of unsurpassed valor, which have no history for mortal vision.

It is no marvel that almost uninterrupted success attended the campaigns of this Napoleon in genius, and Washington in religious convictions, of the period in which conquered and reigned David the son of Jesse. We do not forget the special favor of Israel's God, without which, like the great captain and emperor of France, he would have been at last a brilliant failure, instead of leaving the Hebrew commonwealth as the American hero, and its first president, left a Republic, in the enjoyment of peace and unexampled prosperity.

The lieutenant general of David's army,



Joab, was a remarkable man. For forty years he was at the head of the army, and never sustained a defeat. Every way he was superior to the unprincipled and ambitious Abner. His figure was compact, soldierly, capable of great endurance, and commanding. His genius, in any age, combined with his personal presence, would have given him a high, if not the highest, place among military chieftains. Whatever the true character of this conqueror before God, he was a splendid general. Cool, sagacious, and fearless, he was never unbalanced by the most sudden surprises, nor foiled by the cunning of an adversary. David showed unbounded confidence in his ability and loyalty.

We add the catalogue of David's leading officers and heroes, from the sacred roll:—

"These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel. And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam a Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear



against three hundred slain by him at one time. And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighties. He was with David at Pas-dammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines. And they set themselves in the midst of that parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the Lord saved them by a great deliverance.

"Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Bethlehem. And David longed and said, O that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is at the gate! And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David; but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the Lord, and said, My God forbid it me



that I should do this thing : shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy ? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest.

“ And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three : for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew them, and had a name among the three. Of the three, he was more honorable than the two ; for he was their captain : howbeit he attained not unto the first three. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts ; he slew two lion-like men of Moab ; also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day. And he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high ; and in the Egyptian’s hand was a spear like a weaver’s beam ; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian’s hand, and slew him with his own spear. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among the three mighties. Behold, he was honorable among the thirty, but attained not to the



first three: and David set him over his guard.

"Also the valiant men of the armies were Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, Abi-ezer the Antothite, Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite, Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah, that pertained to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite, the sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shage the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur, Hopher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai, Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri, Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armor-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruah, Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him,



Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite, Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha, his brother, the Tizite, Eliel the Mehavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mesobaite.

“Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones, and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul’s brethren of Benjamin. The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth; and Berachah, and Jehu the Antothite, and Ismaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty; and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Josabad the Gederathite, Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite, Elkanah, and Jesiah, and Azareel, and Joezer, and



Jashobeam, the Korhites, and Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor, and of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains; Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh. There were of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least was over a hundred, and the greatest over a thousand."

How like "a dream when one awaketh," seems to us, all the "pomp and circumstance" of those ancient wars!

What for ages has it all been to the brave men who fought and fell, or returned from battle to die at home?

And yet their work was great in the world's long history.

Men die, and not only do "principles live,"



but Christ lives and reigns, and to his universal dominion all revolutions and events ever tend. The shedding of his blood was a declaration of war by the "powers of darkness" unknown before; and the battle will rage until they are driven from the field by the victorious Immanuel.



## Part Fourth.

DAVID'S MUSIC AND POETRY OF COURT AND CAMP.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE POETRY AND MUSIC OF THE HEBREWS WHEN  
DAVID WAS CROWNED KING OF ISRAEL.



HOW wonderful is the power of poetry and music! The child feels it when the song is breathed over the cradle; youth is gladdened, saddened, and soothed by the mysterious charm; and old age finds in the measures of poetry and the voice of melody, its sweetest pleasures.

That heart is debased, or hard beyond all softening influences, which is no longer moved by the inspiration of the true poet, and the harmonies of vocal and instrumental music.

Musical instruments are mentioned soon after the human race began to increase in the



world. Jubal, the son of Lamech, a near descendant of Cain, was the inventor of them.

The harp and organ are particularly noticed. The former was a stringed instrument, resembling that in use now. There was, however, in the early ages, also the psaltery, having a greater number of strings. Indeed, there seem to have been several instruments of the same general style, resembling the harp, lyre, and guitar, some of which were played with a bow, like the violin.

The organ was very simple, being composed of a few pipes, and carried in the hand.

There were also wind instruments, or those used in connection with the breath. Although the trumpets were at first made of rams' horns, such as the Israelites blew around the walls of Jericho, some of them were straight. The finest-toned, were the silver ones, used by the priests for calling the people to their sacrifices; their clear tones were also the signal for battle.

There were several instruments played by *percussion*, or striking together, or with the hand. The timbrel, or tambourine is one of the earliest of the kind mentioned in the









Song of Moses and Miriam. Page 267.



Bible. When Jacob left Laban in Syria, and was overtaken by him, the father of the young patriarch's wives reproached his son-in-law for departing secretly. The exacting Syrian intimated, that had he known that Jacob was resolved to go, he would have sent him away with "songs, with tabret, and with harp." The tabret clearly was the timbrel or tambourine. Its Hebrew name was *toph*; and it was used when lamenting the dead, and is still the accompaniment of the "mournful song" among the people of the East.

There are some musical instruments alluded to in the Bible whose precise form and quality it is impossible to determine. The captivity of the Hebrews in Egypt made them acquainted with a variety of music peculiar to that highly civilized nation, as well as with its art and agriculture.

We can hardly imagine a grander oratorio than that upon the Red Sea's shore, after the waters had returned upon Pharaoh and his host; when to the exulting song of Moses, Miriam the prophetess and her choir of women responded, with a lofty psalm of praise and the loud timbrels. How stirring



must have been the jubilant strains, swelling over the rolling sea, dark with Egypt's men of war, and floating away into the solitary wilderness !

God, with his royal train of ministering spirits, and nature made and controlled by him, inspired the earliest poetry recorded. The sun's first smile upon our sphere is announced in poetical language of sublime brevity :—

“ God said, Let there be light,  
And light was.”

This impressive description of the world's illumination, as it rose from chaos, is imitated well by a later and inspired pen : —

“ He spake, and it was done ;  
He commanded, and it stood fast.”

When the dark eclipse of sin had fallen upon the world, the spirit of poesy was an angel of love, beauty, and worship, not driven from the abode of man, but attending him wherever he wandered.

The brief history of Abel, in the comparative solitude of mankind, “ stands like a mournful flower, marked with blood.” Jehovah's



words of startling inquiry and retribution are simple yet beautiful : —

“Where is Abel thy brother?  
What deed hast thou done?  
The voice of thy brother's blood  
Cries to me from the earth.  
And now cursed art thou, an exile in the earth,  
Which hath opened her mouth,  
The stream of thy brother's blood  
To drink from thy hand.  
When thou shalt till the ground  
It shall not yield thee its strength;  
A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.”

How briefly, in poetical form, is expressed the awful purpose of divine abandonment, and destruction of the descendants of the fratricide ! —

“My spirit shall not always  
Continue to act in men,  
For they are flesh.”

That decision of the Infinite One was the knell of doom to the world.

When the deluge subsided, and on the reviving earth had been reared the altar of worship, and planted the fruitful vines, Noah breathed, in the language of poetry, the curse of God upon his unfilial son : —



“Cursed be Canaan;  
 Let him be a servant of servants to his brethren,  
 Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem,  
 And let Canaan be his servant.  
 Let Jehovah enlarge Japheth;  
 Let him dwell in the tents of Shem,  
 And let Canaan be his servant.”

After the race had again multiplied, and rebelled against Jehovah, very forcibly is the vain and foolish ambition of men rebuked by the holy irony of God, both in his words and deeds of judgment. The aspiring people would scale heaven; God “laid his finger upon their lips, changed the articulation of their breath, and these are the ruin of their enterprise.”

Said the men on the plains of Shinar, —

“Go to, let us build a city and tower,  
 Whose top may reach to heaven.”

Jehovah, imitating their proud resolve, replies, —

“Go to, let us go down now,  
 And there confound their language.  
 They have begun their work,  
 And nothing will be restrained  
 Till the work is accomplished.”

The patriarchs who flourished at a later



period were gifted and poetical men. The leader of the splendid succession, Abram, was a hero of faith and in arms.

Nowhere but among his people was found such lofty trust, and its expression in the eloquence of action, and the words of poetry. "The poetry of other nations represents men as holding intercourse with false gods, with genii, and departed heroes, but not with the true and only God of heaven and earth, and in a way so calm and confiding. The stranger has no other friend but God, who sent him a pilgrim into this land of strangers; but him he held fast, as the best of all friends. What delicate passages occur in the conversation and intercourse of God with him, where he comforts and directs him in regard to the future, gives him now a token of his covenant and friendship, now a new name, then memorial signs, and requires of him, now this, and now that, return of affectionate confidence."

"Fear thou not, Abram;  
I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward.  
And he brought him forth abroad, and said,  
Look towards heaven, and tell the stars.



Art thou able to number them?  
 And he said, So shall thy seed be.  
 And he had faith in Jehovah,  
 And he counted his faith to him  
 For righteousness."

Jacob's history is equally wonderful, and marked with poetical passages. How sublimely is recorded a memorable scene, when a fugitive from the face of an angry brother! —

"He reached a place and spent the night,  
 For the sun was now already set.  
 Then he took a stone from off the place,  
 And laid it for his pillow,  
 And laid him down to sleep.  
 And there he dreamed, and lo! a ladder stood  
 Extended high above the earth,  
 Whose top reached up to heaven,  
 And messengers of God went up and down upon it.  
 And lo! Jehovah stood above and said,  
 I am Jehovah, the God of thy fathers.

And Jacob awoke from his sleep, and said,  
 Surely, Jehovah is in this place,  
 And yet I knew it not! And he was sore afraid, and said,  
 How dreadful is this place!  
 This is none other but the house of God;  
 Here is the gate of heaven.

And Jacob took the stone, at break of day,  
 And set it for a monument,  
 And poured upon it oil, and called the place Bethel.



And Jacob vowed a vow, and said,  
If God henceforth be with me,  
And guard me in the way I go,  
And give me food and raiment,  
That I return and see my father's house in peace,  
Then shall Jehovah be my God,  
And this, which I have placed a monument,  
Shall be the house of God."

The wrestling beneath the watchful stars, a few years later, is written in language no less beautiful.

In Jacob's will, recorded in the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis, there breathes the very soul of poetry.

And softly upon the desert air, around the wandering Hebrews, fell the divine benediction from the lips of Balaam, hired by Balak, to curse the strange host, feared by the pagan chief! There is no finer prophetic poetry in the Bible.

And later, what lofty strains burst from the inspired lips of Deborah, when she was celebrating, with Barak, the splendid victory over the Syrian Sisera!

Moses, whose genius rose full-orbed upon the night of servitude and oppression which succeeded the patriarchal age, was no less a



gifted poet than an heroic chieftain and unequalled lawgiver. His song on the Red Sea's shore, the description of Jehovah's appearance on Sinai, and his psalm in prospect of death, have all the inspiration of the muse.

"He died, says the beautiful tradition of his people, at the mouth of God, and God himself buried him. He died upon a mountain summit, overlooking a land for which he had done, and suffered, all that human powers could do, and suffer. His eyes might behold it, but his foot not tread upon it. Though firm as a rock in patience, in doing, and in suffering, unbelief and impatience had caused even him to waver, and therefore he came not to his place of rest, and survived not the attainment of the end for which he journeyed. Wise and happy provision for him, that he did not survive it! Thus were preserved, unstained with the blood of the Canaanites, those hands which stretched the rod over the Red Sea, which received the law in the clouds, which built the sanctuary of God. Even in the battle with the Amalekites they were raised only in prayer.

"We have the soul of Moses, severe, full of



zeal, and borne down with anxiety, even to death, in his last glowing and poetical effusion. In this poem the images that surround us are the flaming mountain, the fiery and cloudy pillars which went before Israel, and in them the angel of the countenance of Jehovah."

The ancient worshippers of the Most High, alone, had any just conceptions of the starry heavens, and of this small planet, in the infinity crowded with spheres. They never confounded in thought, or adoration, nature with "nature's God."

There is one poet of antiquity, honored with a place in the Hebrew annals, whose deep experience, and the glowing numbers in which it is embalmed, more resemble David's than those of any other. That mysterious poet, orator, and suffering saint was Job. It is believed that he lived not far from the time of David.

Like Israel's minstrel king, he was prospered and tempted; he suffered, wept, and worshipped. But from no gulf of sin and shame did any of his plaintive accents rise. Like the Hebrew poets, while he had the deepest



sympathy with the sublime and beautiful in the heavens and on the earth, he idolized none of these material forms, but was jealous of Jehovah's honor and glory.

In the vindication of his integrity against the accusations of his friends, he reveals both qualities of mind and heart : —

“ Had I looked upon the sun when it shone forth,  
And the moon going abroad in its beauty,  
So that my heart had burned in secret,  
And I had kissed my hand for them,  
This would have been an abomination ;  
For I should have denied the God of heaven.”

Another and later bard among the poets of prophecy, describes most sublimely this subjection of all nature to Jehovah when he rides forth in his chariot of war, to conquer and divide the earth : —

“ The mountains saw thee and trembled ;  
The waters passed away ;  
The deep uttered his voice,  
And lifted up his hands on high ;  
The sun and moon stood still in their tents.  
When they saw the brightness of thine arrows,  
The glittering spear of thy lightnings,  
They hasted away.”

Fruitless would be the search, in all the



world of song, for finer descriptions of the ostrich, the horse, and the eagle : —

“A wing with joyous cry is uplifted yonder;  
Is it the wing and feather of the ostrich?  
When she commits her eggs to the earth,  
And leaves them to be warmed by the sand,  
She heeds it not that the foot may crush them,  
And the wild beast trample upon them.  
She casts off her young for none of hers;  
In vain is her travail, but she regards it not;  
For God hath made her forgetful of wisdom,  
And hath not imparted to her reflection.  
At once she is up, and urges herself forward.  
She laughs at the horse and his rider.

Hast thou given the horse his strength,  
And clothed his neck with its flowing mane?  
Dost thou make him leap like the locust?  
The pomp of his neighing is terrible;  
He paweth the earth, and joyeth in his strength,  
When he goeth against the weapons of war.  
He scoffeth at fear, and is nothing daunted,  
And turneth not back from facing the sword.  
Above him is the rattling of the quiver,  
The lightning of the spear and the lance.  
With vehemence and rage he devoureth the ground,  
And believeth not that the trumpet is sounding.  
The trumpet sounds louder; he cries, Aha!  
And from far he snuffeth the slaughter,  
The war-cry of the captains, and the shout of battle.  
Is it by thy understanding that the hawk flieth,  
And spreadeth his wings to the south wind?



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Is it at thy word that the eagle is lifted up,  
And buildeth his nest on high?  
He inhabiteth the rock, and all night is there,  
High upon the cliff, his rocky fortress.  
From this he spieth out his prey;  
His eye searcheth it out from afar.  
His young ones are greedy of blood,  
And where the carcasses are there is he."

We shall add only one more descriptive poem. It is a picture of Job himself, and is a very fine delineation of an ancient emir, or chief, imbued with the religious spirit.

"O that I were as in the ancient times,  
The days when God preserved me!  
The light shone clear upon my head,  
And by his light I walked through darkness.  
As once I was in the days of my youth,  
When God took counsel with me in my tent,  
When the Almighty yet was with me,  
And round about me were my servants!

And where I went a stream of milk flowed on,  
The rock poured out for me rivers of oil:  
When from my house I went to the assembly,  
And spread my carpet in the place of meeting,  
The young men saw me, and concealed themselves;  
The aged rose up, and continued standing;  
Princes refrained from talking,  
And laid their hands upon their mouths;  
The voice of counsellors was silent;  
He whose ear heard me counted me blessed,



And he whose eye saw me bore witness to me,  
Because I delivered the poor that cried,  
The fatherless that had none to help him.  
He that was ready to perish blessed me,  
And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy;  
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;  
My judgment was as a robe and a diadem.  
I was eyes to the blind,  
And feet was I to the lame.  
I was a father to the poor,  
And searched out the cause of strangers.  
I brake the jaws of the wicked,  
And plucked the spoil from his teeth.

Then I said, I shall perish in my nest,  
I shall multiply my days as the phoenix,  
My root shall be nourished by the waters,  
The dew lay all night upon my branches,  
My strength in me shall be refreshed,  
My bow renewed in my hand.

Men gave ear to me, and waited;  
They kept silence at my counsel;  
After my words they spake not again;  
Yet my speech dropped upon them as the dew.

They waited for my words as for the rain,  
And opened their mouths as for the latter rain.  
If I laughed at them they were not offended,  
And no one saddened the joy of my countenance.

I chose for them and sat as chief;  
I dwelt as a king in the midst of my army,  
As a comforter among the mourners."

No mention, we believe, is made of man's



music in the Book of Job; but the music of nature, from the hum of the insect to the thunder breaking along the heavens, brought to his attentive ear tidings of God, whom he praised in renewed prosperity with joyful lips.

But we cannot pause over the gems of song scattered through the sacred narrative, before David touched his wondrous harp.

There is no one who can tell us in which character David excelled — that of shepherd, Christian monarch, or poet. According to the Bible narrative, he occupied the first rank in each, and had no rival.

From childhood he had a passion for music, and began its culture with the shepherd's pipe and the simple harp, in early youth composing the songs which he sang to the melody of the strings swept by his hand.

David, like all true bards, was "poet-born," and his culture was mainly the teaching of nature he so ardently loved. He may have frequented the school of the prophets at Ramah, but his muse was trained for highest soaring, among the scenes of his native land. Snow-crowned Lebanon, its green and lovely



valleys, the rocks and rills, the forest and plain, the glories of the morning and evening, were all familiar objects to the poet of Bethlehem.

The most gifted, cherished poets of every age have had but little of the means of discipline in the schools. The Grecian Homer, the English Shakspeare, and Burns of Scotland, are examples of this outgushing song from the overflowing soul, learning its measures from the voices of melody coming to it from earth and sky.

David, it is said in the Scriptures, was called of God to be the poet of his people, the bard of the church in all ages, "the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of God, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel."

He longed to build the magnificent temple, but was denied the privilege. It was his great work to make peace with the nations for this very object, and create the sublimest songs of praise for its courts.

The temple of Solomon! Where is now its glory of dome and turret, of arch and porch, of gold, silver, and precious stones? Long ago it departed; but the temple of David's



song was never more beautiful and admired. Not a column is overthrown, not a stone mouldered or marred, nor any of its fine gold, or garniture of diamonds, dim. The resplendent arches, the swelling dome, and the shining towers, are the same to-day as when the gloriuous structure rose before the worshipping tribes of Israel. This spiritual temple of harmony will survive all the thrones and cathedrals of the world.

Not only had David the native genius, and the appointment of God by his purpose and inspiration, to be the Psalmist of Israel, but his next qualification for the unrivalled honor, was deep, uniform piety. Religion was not a sentiment with him — no glow of enthusiastic admiration of a Deity whose principal manifestations were the works of nature. But he was a man of prayer and faith. God was a holy King, distinct in his personal character and written revelation from the manifold works of his hand. David loved nature, but it was not God to his penitent, trusting, loving soul. He maintained his religious character wherever he wandered, scorning the very shadow of idolatry thrown between him and the holy



Lawgiver and Judge of all. This sincere piety was the strength and beauty of his song.

Another providential preparation for the position of the world's great Psalmist, was his *varied experience*.

Never was there such an experience before, nor has there been one like it since. "His life was but an April day," sunshine and shower succeeding each other continually. God raised him on high, then cast him down. He gave him a friend who stands alone among men in unselfish, unchanging affection — then took him away. He gave him a noble family, and through it, were laid on the monarch the heaviest blows of discipline, till, with Job, his heart was broken.

In wilderness, and palace, and camp, he was environed with dangers, until his heart was attuned to all the joys and sorrows of a fallen race.

The great sin, over which the wicked rejoice, by the overruling mercy of God, gave to the church her most touching, thrilling melodies. His victories and honors, his unlimited power, and his strong impulses exposed him in a



favoring hour to the arch-fiend, who had followed him so watchfully with his arrows, and overcame him. But how soon the penitential cry was heard!

He was not an impure man; his life, as a whole, and his poetry prove it. Compare his psalms with the poetry of Greece and Rome, and of England's greatest bards, and what a contrast in holy refinement and spiritual elevation! Nor was the king of Israel a murderer in spirit. His first crime of sensual indulgence led naturally, almost inevitably, to the other—Uriah's death. There was blood on his soul, but over it he poured floods of penitential tears. He was kind and pitiful, loving and condescending.

His character will bear the closest comparison with all ancient bards and heroes. Mark his magnanimity and generosity contrasted with the "cold, mean, settled hatred of his persecutor;" his spirit of forbearance and forgiveness; his remembrance of kindness shown him; his self-denial, and the dedication of his private wealth to the temple he was not permitted to build.

Whatever the guilt of his transgressions



before God, how could we have spared the voice of the sinner at Jehovah's feet? Compare him with the nobleman and poet, Lord Byron, who sinned darkly, repeatedly, then cursed God, and died; or, with nature's humble bard, Robert Burns, who also "sinned and sobbed," but left no songs of penitence, faith, and pardon. Poor Burns we will not judge; yet O, how inferior his rank on earth to the Psalmist of Israel!

To a mind competent, by its impartial judgment, to feel the force of evidence in the case, the undisguised revelation of David's sin, and his own unsparing condemnation of himself, are the most convincing proof of the divine authority of the Scriptures, and the sincerity and depth of the Psalmist's piety.

Noah's sin of intoxication, by using too freely the fermented juice of a plant unknown before, is also quoted by the enemies of God and his Word, when, under the circumstances, it was a trivial offence compared with modern drinking customs. Abraham dissembled in moments of weakness and fear; and who has not? But he was, never-



theless, the noble patriarch, the heroic deliverer of Lot, the intercessor for guilty Sodom, and the "friend of God."

Isaac was timid, and Jacob crafty, and both suffered for their sins, were penitent, and loyal to their eternal King.

David never apologizes for his or any man's transgression; but by his confession of weakness, and prayers for holiness of heart, he enforces the solemn admonition, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Lyrical poetry, or sacred song, rose to its highest strains under the sceptre of David. He gathered "the scattered wild flowers of the country, and planted them as a royal garland upon Mount Zion." He regarded his harp, his throne, and his laurels of victory, as the Lord's, and they were all brought into the service of praise to the Almighty King.

Every important event was celebrated, because David felt that his reign was appointed by God for his own glory through his imperfect church in the world; and, therefore, "in his psalms his whole kingdom lives." They became the "song-book of the nation." Later



poets imitated the kingly bard, and some of their noble compositions have a place in that collection of songs. They were sung on occasions of popular rejoicing, with enthusiasm that stirred the souls of the people, standing in the open air, or thronging the court of the temple.

Four thousand Levites, with a rich official dress, were arranged in classes or choirs under separate leaders, of whom there were three preëminent — Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. Korah's children, who are especially named, it is supposed, belonged to the choir of Heman.

David's psalms in their variety include all the higher qualities of Hebrew poetry. Their simplicity is wonderful. "Each flower stands rooted in truth; the poetry is only fact on fire." No less marked is the range of thought and feeling. In a single brief psalm he sweeps all the chords of the human heart "from the groan to the pæan, from the deep self-accusation to the transport of gratitude. The devotional spirit of these hallowed odes is a perfect mystery, except on the theory of inspiration. The touched spirit of David,



whether wandering in the desert or seated in his own palace, whether in defeat or victory, whether in glory or in deep guilt, turns instinctively to heaven. Firmly, with his blood-red hand, he grasps the Book of the Law of his God ! From old promises, as well as fresh revelations, he extracts the hope, and builds up the image of a coming Redeemer ! It is especially beautiful to see the wanderer of Maon and Engedi, surrounded by the lion faces of his men, — the centre of Israel's disaffection, distress, and despair, — retiring from their company to pray in the clefts of the rock ; or, sleepless, amid their savage sleeping forms, and the wild music of their breathing, singing to his own soul those sacred poems, which have been the life of devotion in every successive age.

"From all these qualities of the psalms arises their exquisite adaptation to the praising purposes alike of private Christians, of families, and of public assemblies, in every age. We are far from denying that other aids to, and expressions of, devotion may be legitimately used ; but David, after all, has been the chief singer of the church, and the hold



in the wilderness is still its grand orchestra. Some, indeed, as of old, that are discontented and disgusted with life, may have repaired to it; but there, too, you trace the footsteps of the widow and fatherless. There the stranger in a strange land has dried his tears; and there those of the penitent have been loosened in gracious showers. There the child has received an early foretaste of the sweetness of the green pastures and still waters of piety. There the aged has been taught confidence against life or death in the sure mercies of David; and there the darkness of the depressed spirit has been raised up, and borne away like a cloud on the viewless tongue of the morning wind. But mightier spirits, too, have derived strength from those Hebrew melodies. The soul of the Reformer has vibrated under them to its depths; and the lone hand of a Luther, holding his banner before the eyes of Europe, has trembled less that it was stretched out to the tune of David's heroic psalms. On them the freed spirit of the martyr has soared away. And have not destruction and death heard their fame, when, on the brown heaths of Scotland, the



stern lay was lifted up, by the persecuted, like a new drawn sword, and waved flashing before the eyes of the foemen?

‘In Judah’s land God is well known ;  
His name’s in Israel great ;  
In Salem is his tabernacle,  
In Zion is his seat.  
There arrows of the bow he brake,  
The shield, the sword, the spear ;  
More glorious thou than hills of prey,  
More excellent art far.’

“ Wild, holy, tameless strains, how have ye run down through ages, in which large poems, systems, and religions, have perished, firing the souls of poets, kissing the lips of children, smoothing the pillows of the dying, nerving the warrior to heroic rage, perfuming the chambers of solitary saints, and clasping into one the hearts and voices of thousands of assembled worshippers ; tinging many a literature, and finding a home in many a land ; and still ye seem as fresh, and young, and powerful as ever ; yea, preparing for even mightier triumphs than when first chanted ! Britain, Germany, and America now sing



you; but you must yet awaken the dumb millions of China and Japan."

David represented the theocracy, and in this high relation to God and the people often expressed in strongest language his abhorrence of those who would overthrow his kingdom, and thus annihilate the church of God. And it is not improbable that, like Job, he has left in some passages the tone of human frailty. Whatever difficulties may appear to any minds in connection with the imprecations that occasionally burn on his lips, none can deny the softening, refining tendency, on the whole, of the psalms. They cultivate no bitter, revengeful spirit, but lay all human pride and passion at Jehovah's feet.

Every line reveals the transparent *truthfulness* of the Psalmist; there is no concealment, no shadow of hypocrisy. Sensitive, alive to all that is lovely in nature and humanity, the enthusiastic patron of music and poetry, the defender of the true faith, we may safely challenge impartial history to furnish his equal in the annals of a fallen



race, viewed in all his relations to it and to God.

Nothing can show us more clearly and sadly the malignant nature of depravity than the eagerness and bitterness with which the sceptical and the impenitent who believe the Word of God theoretically, dwell upon the faults, and the disgraceful falling of those whose Christian character and influence made them conspicuous. Unbelief *feeds* on the sins of the devout, and finds comfort in disloyalty to God by looking at the imperfections of the visible church. Continually do the wicked verify God's declaration, "They eat up the sins of my people as they eat bread." How many men have sneered at David who were "whited sepulchres" of corruption!

Truly the Psalmist of the Redeemer's Israel won and wet with tears the laurels of undying fame. When the scoffs of the sceptical and trifling have died away before the songs of millennial rejoicing, the frailties and sins of the *man* will be forgotten in the melodies of his inspired minstrelsy floating over land and sea!



## CHAPTER II.

## THE SONGS OF EXILE.



WE shall neither attempt a formal division of the psalms, nor follow the order of their composition, but introduce them in harmony with the general plan of this work. There are none that can be traced to his youthful experience in Bethlehem, or in the court of Saul. That he did write sacred songs, which were sung while he played upon his harp, we cannot doubt. It accords with the early developments of genius in everything, whether scientific culture or poetry. And how interesting would be the fragments of his earliest song, his juvenile and youthful efforts in psalmody!

A few representative psalms will illustrate the great periods and experiences of Dávid's life, and deepen, we hope, the interest any



reader may have felt before in the songs of David.

In regard to many of the hallowed odes, we have not the slightest hint concerning the date or occasion of their composition; they seem to have a general reference to David's trials and triumphs, to Israel, the Messiah, and the Zion of his love.

Whether all of them were actually used in public worship we do not know; but that they formed the treasury of sacred song for the sanctuary none can doubt.

There is one psalm which, wherever composed, is beautifully descriptive of his faithful service among his father's flocks, designed to illustrate Jehovah's care of his people. How like the Christian's transition from earth to the "fields arrayed in living green," is the allusion to the passage of the sheep through a deep ravine, from a pasture which no longer yielded food, to another fresh and abundant. Such is the shadow, and *only a shadow*, through which the ransomed soul wings its way\* to heaven. And God did exalt and honor David before his foes, according to his own prediction.



“Jehovah is my Shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He maketh me lie down  
Upon green pastures;  
He leadeth me  
Beside still waters;  
He restoreth my life.  
He leadeth me in a straight path,  
Still faithful to his name.  
And though I walk  
Through death's dark valley,  
I fear no evil,  
For Thou art with me;  
Thy trusty shepherd's staff  
Is comfort and support.  
Here, spread before my eyes,  
Thou hast prepared my table  
In presence of my foes;  
My head thou dost anoint,  
My cup is running over.  
Yea, goodness and mercy follow me  
Through all the days of my life.

We have also an ode to the starry heavens, reflecting, as a tranquil lake does their glory, the wonder and adoring rapture of the poet's expanding mind beneath their magnificence, while he lived among the hills of Bethlehem:—

“O Lord our Lord,  
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!



Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.  
 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained  
     strength,  
 Because of mine enemies,  
 That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.  
 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,  
 The moon and the stars which thou hast ordained,  
 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
 And the son of man, that thou visitest him?  
 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,  
 And hast crowned him with glory and honor.  
 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy  
     hands;  
 Thou hast put all things under his feet:  
 All sheep and oxen,  
 Yea, and the beasts of the field,  
 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
 And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.  
 O LORD, OUR LORD,  
 HOW EXCELLENT IS THY NAME IN ALL THE EARTH."

After a glance at the earth, which reflects Jehovah's glory, and praises him with infant voices, "David's imagination and faith combined to turn his eye into a telescope; a glimmer of the true starry scheme came like a revelation to his soul; and, considering at once the magnitude of the heavenly bodies, and their order, beauty, and lustre, he cried out, 'What is man?' This was his first feel-



ing; but it was breathlessly followed by a perception of the exceeding grandeur of man's position in reference to this lower world. 'Thou hast made him lord over the works of thy hands below,' although these sovereign heavens seem to defy his dominion, and to laugh over his tiny head. It was not permitted even to David to foresee the time when man's strong hand was to draw that sky nearer, like a curtain — when man was to unfold its laws, to predict its revolutions, and to plant the flag of triumph upon its remote pinnacles. Since his eye rested, half in despair, upon that ocean of glory, and since he drew back from it in shuddering admiration, how many bold divers have, from every point of the shore, plunged amid its waters, and what spoils brought home! — here the single pearl of a planet, and here the rich coral of a constellation, and here, again, the convoluted shell of a firmament — besides, what all have tended to give us, the hope of fairer treasures, of entire argosies of supersolar spoil, till the words of the poet shall become true, —

'Heaven, hast thou secrets?

Man unbare me; I have none.'"



The deep spiritual meaning of this psalm is revealed in the New Testament. It is quoted by Jesus in the twenty-first chapter of Matthew, and applied to the children singing their hosannas to the "Son of David;" and by Paul in Hebrews, the second chapter. David most lovingly and devoutly

"Looked through nature up to nature's God."

Although we have no record of poetical effusions in Bethlehem, and in the palace of Saul, we know that his harp and muse were, next to God, who inspired his harmonies, his comfort in persecutions and exile. He calmed his troubled spirit, and often made the deepest solitudes sweet to his lonely spirit by his harp, and the composition of his immortal songs.

Nor can we doubt that softening, saving impressions were made upon many of the heathen who listened to his devotional strains. Indeed, it is probable that pagans were converted by his influence to the Hebrew faith; for we read of permanent accessions to his army, and also of other subjects, from the tribes among whom he had lived.



The first song of exile, whose title declares its origin, was composed while David was concealed by Michal, and the house was surrounded by spies. The messengers of vengeance sent by the king are well compared to blood-hounds tracking their prey. Jehovah's sovereign power and hastening judgment upon his enemies are expressed in the strongest language. What figures could surpass in power the representation of their impotent rage by Jehovah's *laughter*? — or of their entire overthrow, by chaff and stubble, in the resistless flames?

This forcible imagery reminds us of the awful words of God written by Solomon, also a royal poet, respecting all unrepenting souls: "Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded, therefore I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."

"Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God:  
Defend me from them that rise up against me.  
Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,  
And save me from bloody men.  
For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul:  
The mighty are gathered against me;  
Not for my transgression,



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Nor for my sins, O Lord.

They run and prepare themselves without my fault :

Awake to help me, and behold.

Thou therefore, O Lord God of hosts,

The God of Israel,

Awake to visit all the heathen :

Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors.

They return at evening : they make a noise like a dog,

And go round about the city.

Behold, they belch out with their mouth :

Swords are in their lips :

For who, say they, doth hear ?

But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them ;

Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

Because of his strength will I wait upon thee :

For God is my defence.

The God of my mercy shall prevent me :

God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.

Slay them not, lest my people forget :

Scatter them by thy power ;

And bring them down, O Lord our shield.

For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips

Let them even be taken in their pride :

And for cursing and lying which they speak.

Consume them in wrath ;

Consume them, that they may not be :

And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob

Unto the ends of the earth.

And at evening let them return ; and let them make a noise  
like a dog,

And go round about the city.

Let them wander up and down for meat,





Man Slayers. Page 300.







And grudge if they be not satisfied.  
But I will sing of thy power ;  
Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning :  
For thou hast been my defence  
And refuge in the day of my trouble.  
Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing :  
For God is my defence, and the God of my mercy."

When Doeg the Edomite betrayed David to Saul, informing the king that the fugitive was with Abimelech, sternly he swept his harp to the fiery numbers that describe the evil tongue and the overthrow of the proud foe ! Perhaps in nothing, excepting the waste of time and money, are a sinful race so insensible to the claims and final judgment of God, as in the lawless use of that same offending tongue. Therefore Christ impressively declared that for "every idle word" we must give our account in the day of judgment.

"Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man ?  
The goodness of God endureth continually.  
Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs,  
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.  
Thou lovest evil more than good,  
And lying rather than to speak righteousness.  
Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.  
God shall likewise destroy thee forever.



He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-  
place,

And root thee out of the land of the living.

The righteous also shall see, and fear,

And shall laugh at him :

Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength,

But trusted in the abundance of his riches,

And strengthened himself in his wickedness.

But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God :

I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it :

And I will wait on thy name ; for it is good before thy  
saints."

More plaintive is his song over the treachery of the Ziphites, expressing his unfailing assurance of the divine deliverance — sounding forth the apostolic shout of triumph, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"Save me, O God, by thy name,

And judge me by thy strength.

Hear my prayer, O God ;

Give ear to the words of my mouth.

For strangers are risen up against me,

And oppressors seek after my soul :

They have not set God before them.

Behold, God is mine helper :

The Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

He shall reward evil unto mine enemies :

Cut them off in thy truth.



I will freely sacrifice unto thee :  
I will praise thy name, O Lord ; for it is good.  
For he hath delivered me out of all trouble ;  
And mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies."

From the cave of Engedi, his wild refuge  
from the wrath of Saul, rang upon the still air  
of the wilderness the bitter prayer, blending  
with it the notes of his all-conquering faith.

The psalm is a striking prophecy of the  
persecutions which were to come upon God's  
people in the ages after, and the glory of  
Zion's King above all the scenes of conflict.

The harper spoke for Daniel in the lions'  
den, and the martyrs of every land since was  
shed the blood of "righteous Abel."

"Be merciful unto me, O God,  
Be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee :  
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,  
Until these calamities be overpast.  
I will cry unto God most high ;  
Unto God that performeth all things for me.  
He shall send from heaven, and save me  
From the reproach of him that would swallow me up.  
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.  
My soul is among lions ;  
And I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the  
sons of men,  
Whose teeth are spears and arrows,  
And their tongue a sharp sword.



Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;  
 Let thy glory be above all the earth.

They have prepared a net for my steps;  
 My soul is bowed down:  
 They have digged a pit before me,  
 Into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.

My heart is fixed, O God,  
 My heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

Awake up, my glory;  
 Awake, psaltery and harp:

I myself will awake early.

I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:

I will sing unto thee among the nations.

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens,  
 And thy truth unto the clouds.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:  
 Let thy glory be above all the earth."

The eleventh, seventeenth, eighteenth, twenty-eighth, fifty-second, fifty-ninth, sixty-first, sixty-third, and eighty-sixth psalms have also the under-tone of the exile's experience; and, with some others, were undoubtedly written during the eventful years of wandering.

They will echo to the end of time the spiritual solitudes, warfare with foes within and without, trust and triumphs of God's people. Nothing less than the inspiration of the



Almighty could so suggest the language of universal Christian experience, through which a persecuted king of that ancient period expressed the cruelty of royal hate, the conflicts with heathen foes, and his victories.



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE SONGS OF THE BATTLE-FIELD.



WE have no allusion in sacred history to the music of the marches to the plains of war. But the power of the Lord of hosts in giving victory, and the joy of conquest over the enemies of Israel and of God, are expressed in sublimest strains.

There can be nothing grander in human language than the song of triumph when the great struggle with Saul was over, and the vacant throne became his own.

This psalm, the eighteenth in the collection, refers to all his enemies, of whom Saul had been chief, and was designed for permanent temple service :

“ I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer ;

My God, my strength, in whom I will trust ;



My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised :  
So shall I be saved from mine enemies.

The sorrows of death compassed me,  
And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

The sorrows of hell compassed me about :

The snares of death prevented me.

In my distress I called upon the Lord,

And cried unto my God :

He heard my voice out of his temple,

And my cry came before him, even into his ears.

Then the earth shook and trembled,

The foundations also of the hills moved

And were shaken, because he was wroth.

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,

And fire out of his mouth devoured :

Coals were kindled by it.

He bowed the heavens also, and came down :

And darkness was under his feet.

And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly :

Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

He made darkness his secret place ;

His pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed,

Hail-stones and coals of fire.

The Lord also thundered in the heavens,

And the Highest gave his voice ;

Hail-stones and coals of fire.

Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them ;



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And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

Then the channels of waters were seen,

And the foundations of the world were discovered

At thy rebuke, O Lord,

At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

He sent from above, he took me,

He drew me out of many waters.

He delivered me from my strong enemy,

And from them which hated me: for they were too strong  
for me.

They prevented me in the day of my calamity:

But the Lord was my stay.

He brought me forth also into a large place:

He delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;

According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

For I have kept the ways of the Lord,

And have not wickedly departed from my God.

For all his judgments were before me,

And I did not put away his statutes from me.

I was also upright before him,

And I kept myself from mine iniquity.

Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my  
righteousness,

According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful;

With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;

With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure;

And with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.

For thou wilt save the afflicted people;

But wilt bring down high looks.



For thou wilt light my candle :  
The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.  
For by thee I have run through a troop ;  
And by my God have I leaped over a wall.  
As for God, his way is perfect :  
The word of the Lord is tried :  
He is a buckler to all those that trust in him.  
For who is God save the Lord ?  
Or who is a rock save our God ?  
It is God that girdeth me with strength,  
And maketh my way perfect.  
He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
And setteth me upon my high places.  
He teacheth my hands to war,  
So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.  
Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation :  
And thy right hand hath holden me up,  
And thy gentleness hath made me great.  
Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,  
That my feet did not slip.  
I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them :  
Neither did I turn again till they were consumed.  
I have wounded them that they were not able to rise :  
They are fallen under my feet.  
For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle :  
Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.  
Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies,  
That I might destroy them that hate me.  
They cried, but there was none to save them ;  
Even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.  
Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind :  
I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.



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Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people ;  
And thou hast made me the head of the heathen :  
A people whom I have not known shall serve me.  
As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me :  
The strangers shall submit themselves unto me :  
The strangers shall fade away,  
And be afraid out of their close places.

The Lord liveth ; and blessed be my Rock ;  
And let the God of my salvation be exalted.  
It is God that avengeth me,  
And subdueth the people unto me.  
He delivereth me from mine enemies :  
Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me :  
Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.  
Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the  
heathen,  
And sing praises unto thy name.  
Great deliverance giveth he to his king ;  
And sheweth mercy to his anointed,  
To David, and to his seed for evermore."

Similar in sentiment and style, but of a wider sweep and loftier tone at times, is the sixty-eighth psalm, called the "Triumphal March of God." The imagery is varied and transcendently fine, vividly bringing before us the majesty of "Him that rideth upon the heavens," who is also "a father to the fatherless, and a judge of the widows in his holy habitation ;" this last precious promise de-



signed to comfort, until "death is swallowed up in victory," the heart of her whose earthly support is smitten down by her side, leaving to her anxious care the children of her love. We have also the grace and bounty of God set before us in all his regal and paternal relations to the world.

David's lamentation over the death of Jonathan in that closing contest of Saul with the Philistines will always be regarded as a rare literary production — a gem of singular beauty in the sacred casket of flashing diamonds.

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places :  
How are the mighty fallen !  
Tell it not in Gath,  
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon ;  
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,  
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.  
Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew,  
Neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings :  
For there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away,  
The shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed  
with oil.  
From the blood of the slain,  
From the fat of the mighty,  
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,  
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.  
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,  
And in their death they were not divided :



They were swifter than eagles,  
They were stronger than lions.  
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,  
Who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights;  
Who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.  
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!  
O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thy high places.  
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:  
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:  
Thy love to me was wonderful,  
Passing the love of women.  
How are the mighty fallen,  
And the weapons of war perished!"

The twentieth psalm is the great battle-hymn of the warrior-king, set apart for no particular campaign, but to be used whenever the war-cloud darkened the land. It is difficult for us to create, in the "chambers of imagery," a picture of the scenes connected with the history of that song. The assembling of the thousands of musicians at the tabernacle, and later within the temple, and, amid the preparations for conflict, pouring forth the loud harmonies of this stirring song, was an appeal to the Lord of hosts worthy of the only devout and the greatest monarch on earth, and of the splendid army that defended his realm.



“The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble;  
The name of the God of Jacob defend thee,  
Send thee help from the sanctuary,  
And strengthen thee out of Zion,  
Remember all thy offerings,  
And accept thy burnt sacrifice.  
Grant thee according to thine own heart,  
And fulfil all thy counsel.  
We will rejoice in thy salvation,  
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners :  
The Lord fulfil all thy petitions.

Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed;  
He will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving  
strength of his right hand.

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses :  
But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.  
They are brought down and fallen :  
But we are risen, and stand upright.  
Save, Lord :  
Let the king hear us when we call.”

The bugle-blast that summoned Absalom's  
battalions to his standard, and shook to its  
foundation the throne of David, awoke the  
fugitive monarch's muse to strains which for  
years had not thrilled upon a human ear.

The aching heart seemed to throb in the  
trembling strings of his harp, and the wail  
of anguish was heard again in his notes of  
song.



In imagination we can behold him on Mount Olivet, when fleeing from his capital, towards which Absalom was marching, surrounded by his brave adherents, bending over his harp, and singing the third psalm. The spirit of the harper was never so bowed before under the weight of affliction. In the distance lay the deserted "City of David;" around him was the forest solitude of the mountain; before him, humiliating exile, with its uncertain issue. How touchingly floated away from that sacred height this lamentation, with its sweet undertone of faith and hope!—

"Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!

Many are they that rise up against me.

Many there be which say of my soul,

There is no help for him in God.

But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me;

My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

I cried unto the Lord with my voice,

And he heard me out of his holy hill.

I laid me down and slept;

I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,

That have set themselves against me round about.

Arise, O Lord;

Save me, O my God:

For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek  
bone;



Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.  
Salvation belongeth unto the Lord:  
Thy blessing is upon thy people."

The forty-second and forty-third psalms are associated with the exciting and depressing scenes by the Jordan, when the king's company crossed over in their flight before Absalom.

The feelings uttered, and the allusions made, harmonize with the natural course of events at that critical period; and the songs are very musical in their flow.

When the rebellion was convulsing the nation, and the father was compelled to act the warrior again, and summon his loyal troops, doubtless the full heart poured forth its conflicting emotions in the fifty-fifth psalm. The fearful revolt, the trembling, weary soul of the weeper, the scenes at the metropolis in the hands of the enemy, the defection and treachery of Ahithophel and others, the transient prosperity of the wicked, confidence in God — all are there, swelling the song!

"Give ear to my prayer, O God,  
And hide not thyself from my supplication.  
Attend unto me, and hear me;



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I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise,  
Because of the voice of the enemy,  
Because of the oppression of the wicked :  
For they cast iniquity upon me,  
And in wrath they hate me.  
My heart is sore pained within me.  
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.  
Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,  
And horror hath overwhelmed me.  
And I said, O that I had wings like a dove !  
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.  
Lo, then would I wander far off,  
And remain in the wilderness.  
I would hasten my escape  
From the windy storm and tempest.

Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues ;  
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.  
Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof :  
Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.  
Wickedness is in the midst thereof :  
Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

For it was not an enemy that reproached me ;  
Then I could have borne it :  
Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself  
against me ;  
Then I would have hid myself from him :  
But it was thou, a man mine equal,  
My guide, and mine acquaintance.  
We took sweet counsel together,  
And walked unto the house of God in company.  
Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick  
into hell :



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For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

As for me, I will call upon God;

And the Lord shall save me.

Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry  
aloud:

And he shall hear my voice.

He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that  
was against me:

For there were many with me.

God shall hear, and afflict them,

Even he that abideth of old.

Because they have no changes,

Therefore they fear not God.

He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace  
with him:

He hath broken his covenant.

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but  
war was in his heart;

His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn  
swords.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain  
thee:

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of  
destruction:

Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days:  
But I will trust in thee."

Not long after, the "wilderness of Judah,"  
which lay along the eastern frontier of that  
tribe, echoed to softer notes, — of the soul's



longing after God as its chief good, and buoyant hope within the divine complacency. The dethroned king had just before been cursed and slandered, but he rejoiced in the certainty that silence and shame would seal the lying lips.

“ O God, thou art my God ;

Early will I seek thee :

My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee

In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ;

To see thy power and thy glory,

So as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

Because thy loving-kindness is better than life,  
My lips shall praise thee.

Thus will I bless thee while I live :

I will lift up my hands in thy name.

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ;

And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips :

When I remember thee upon my bed,

And meditate on thee in the night watches.

Because thou hast been my help,

Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

My soul followeth hard after thee :

Thy right hand upholdeth me.

But those that seek my soul, to destroy it,  
Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

They shall fall by the sword :

They shall be a portion for foxes.

But the king shall rejoice in God ;

Every one that sweareth by him shall glory :

But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.”



The third psalm is also believed to belong to the same period of civil war.

The only dirge recorded, that David breathed over the slain Absalom, was the brief and thrilling lamentation, which has found a mournful response in many a parental heart since his day :

“ O, my son Absalom !  
My son, my son Absalom !  
Would God I had died for thee,  
O Absalom, my son, my son ! ”



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PSALMS OF REDEMPTION AND OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.



EVERY song of the Psalmist was identified with the kingdom and glory of God, and reflects some of the manifold aspects of spiritual life in the believer's soul.

But we shall contemplate a few of the psalms apart from the scenes of exile, of wandering, and of war, which sound through the ages of time, and around the globe, the notes of redemption through a promised Messiah; and give a voice to the conflicts, griefs, and joys that attend the establishment of Immanuel's kingdom in the individual heart.

The relation of David to Christ stands forth clearly in the meridian glory of the gospel in the New Testament. Matthew begins with the words, "The book of the generation of



Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." How sublimely brief the statement of the Messiah's genealogy, according to the flesh! The eye is directed to Abraham, the "father of the faithful," who spared not his first-born when God demanded the sacrifice — the founder of the visible church; then to David the son of Jesse, whose regal power was the solitary fitting type of Christ's spiritual kingdom; and from the Hebrew monarch we look away to the Son of God, the Head of the church, and Lord of all!

There is a little disagreement between the reckoning of the descent by Matthew and Luke. We shall not give the various explanations of the difficulty, because it does not affect at all the great fact the apostles wished to establish, — *that Jesus of Nazareth was descended from David*. Whether the differences result from errors in copying names, or tracing two lines of genealogy, — one from Mary, the other from Joseph, — or from the relation of Joseph to Heli as the legal heir while he was the son of Jacob, it is not necessary to know. Neither the friends nor the foes of Christianity, in its early period, have left any



record of difficulty in the matter ; while their silence, and that of Jesus, on the subject, is proof that the discrepancy was not important. It is yet another example of God's indifference to human curiosity and disposition to cavil, regarding always essential truth and man's salvation.

It would have been strange indeed, had not the "sweet Psalmist of Israel" sung often of His reign, who was promised to be of the "house and lineage of David," and of whom God had spoken through the eclipse of Eden, saying, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

David led the Hebrew church to victory over external foes — those pagan nations that plotted its overthrow. While celebrating his own conquests he must sing of the triumph of Israel's greater King, of whom, in the line of Hebrew royalty, he was spiritually John the Baptist. No other honor had David to be compared with this record : "Jesus Christ the son of David."

The description of the happy man, viewed in the light of the old dispensation, which introduces the Psalms, is followed by an in-



auguration hymn, composed by David when he was crowned at Jerusalem. It celebrates equally the exaltation of Christ, and declares the opposition to his reign both of Jew and Gentile. In this prophetic application the psalm is quoted by Peter and John, when praising God amid the persecutions which arose at the Pentecostal work of the Holy Spirit.

“ Why do the heathen rage,  
And the people imagine a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth set themselves,  
And the rulers take counsel together,  
Against the Lord,  
And against his Anointed,  
Saying, Let us break their bands asunder,  
And cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh :  
The Lord shall have them in derision.  
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,  
And vex them in his sore displeasure.  
Yet have I set my King  
Upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will declare the decree :  
The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son :  
This day have I begotten thee.  
Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,  
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.  
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ;  
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.



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Be wise now therefore, O ye kings :  
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.  
Serve the Lord with fear,  
And rejoice with trembling.  
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,  
When his wrath is kindled but a little.  
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

A psalm of great sublimity was composed to celebrate the removal of the ark from the house of Obed-edom to its tabernacle in Jerusalem. "The singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan" were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass; and "Zechariah, Asiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom, Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Beniah, with psalteries." Others excelled on the harp. In front of the ark walked the priests, whose silver trumpets led the choral symphony rising above the rejoicing host.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, in his hymn of praise at the birth of the Redeemer's herald, quotes the words of the covenant mentioned by David, transferring the language of the old to the new dispensation.

From the line, —

"Sing unto the Lord a new song," —



the psalm has, by common consent of Jew and Christian, been regarded as an anthem of praise to the Lamb, before whom the exile on solitary Patmos saw the "elders fall down, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song."

In the ecstatic strain there is a wonderful view of the Messiah's kingdom among men. The singer apparently saw the missionaries of the cross preaching Jesus under the shadow of pagan temples, and heard the swelling music of redemption rising from the green islands of the ocean.

"O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name:

Make known his deeds among the people.

Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him:

Talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Glory ye in his holy name:

Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.

Seek the Lord, and his strength:

Seek his face evermore.

Remember his marvellous works that he hath done,

His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth,

O ye seed of Abraham his servant,

Ye children of Jacob his chosen.

He is the Lord our God:

His judgments are in all the earth.

He hath remembered his covenant forever,



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The word which he commanded to a thousand generations.  
Which covenant he made with Abraham,  
And his oath unto Isaac ;  
And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law,  
And to Israel for an everlasting covenant,  
Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,  
The lot of your inheritance :  
When they were but a few men in number ;  
Yea, very few, and strangers in it.  
When they went from one nation to another,  
From one kingdom to another people,  
He suffered no man to do them wrong :  
Yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes,  
Saying, Touch not mine anointed,  
And do my prophets no harm.

O, sing unto the Lord a new song :  
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.  
Sing unto the Lord, bless his name ;  
Show forth his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the heathen,  
His wonders among all people.  
For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised :  
He is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the nations are idols :  
But the Lord made the heavens.  
Honor and majesty are before him :  
Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength.  
Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name :  
Bring an offering, and come into his courts.  
O, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness :  
Fear before him, all the earth.



Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth :  
The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved :  
He shall judge the people righteously.

Let the heavens rejoice,  
And let the earth be glad ;  
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.  
Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein :  
Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord ;  
For he cometh,  
For he cometh to judge the earth.

Save us, O Lord our God,  
And gather us from among the heathen,  
To give thanks unto thy holy name,  
And to triumph in thy praise.  
Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting :  
And let all the people say, Amen.  
Praise ye the Lord."

There is a song of dedication full of touching history. It was sung over the ashes of sacrifice after the destroying angel had sheathed his sword of retribution, drawn because David had numbered the people. The offering marked the site of Solomon's temple ; and the king worthily commemorated the discipline and the favor of God.

"I will extol thee, O Lord ; for thou hast lifted me up,  
And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.  
O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed  
me.



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O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave :  
Thou hast kept me alive,  
That I should not go down to the pit.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his,  
And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.  
For his anger endureth but a moment ;  
In his favor is life :  
Weeping may endure for a night,  
But joy cometh in the morning.

And in my prosperity I said,  
I shall never be moved.  
Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand  
strong :

Thou didst hide thy face,  
And I was troubled.

I cried to thee, O Lord ;

And unto the Lord I made supplication.

What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit ?  
Shall the dust praise thee ? shall it declare thy truth ?

Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me :

Lord, be thou my helper.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing :

Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with glad-  
ness ;

To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be  
silent.

O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever."

The charge to the people respecting the grand enterprise, and the whole procedure of both the king and his subjects, make an unrivalled example of the spirit and the activity





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which will, always and everywhere, insure success in the enterprise of temple-building. It should have a place next to this song of consecration.

"Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great; for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God. Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx-stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colors, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses withal; the gold for things



of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?

"Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly, and gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. And they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

"Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation; and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and



the majesty : for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine ; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all ; and in thy hand is power and might ; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers : our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee a house for thy holy name cometh of thy hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things ; and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee. O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever



in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee; and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

“And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads and worshipped the Lord and the king.”

Six of the psalms are called penitential: their burden is the unfeigned sorrow of his heart on account of *sin*, that great enemy of God and the human soul, for whose atonement David knew the Messiah — the Lamb of God — was to come.

These are the sixth, thirty-second, thirty-eighth, the fifty-first, one hundred and second, and the one hundred and thirtieth. The variety in shades of grief, and their expression, lend to their reading, in connection, a tearful interest. We shall introduce them in order. They are the agonizing cries of the sinful heart, crushed, bleeding, and yet hopeful



under the felt rebuke of a holy yet patient God; while, for importunate pleading and sobbing confession, the fifty-first stands alone: it is the universal voice of the prodigal in the dust at his forgiving Father's feet.

“O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger,  
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.  
Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak:  
O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed.  
My soul is also sore vexed:  
But thou, O Lord, how long?  
Return, O Lord, deliver my soul:  
O save me for thy mercies' sake.  
For in death there is no remembrance of thee:  
In the grave who shall give thee thanks?  
I am weary with my groaning;  
All the night make I my bed to swim;  
I water my couch with my tears.  
Mine eye is consumed because of grief;  
It waxeth old because of all mine enemies.  
Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;  
For the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.  
The Lord hath heard my supplication;  
The Lord will receive my prayer.  
Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:  
Let them return and be ashamed suddenly.”

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
Whose sin is covered.  
Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not  
iniquity,



And in whose spirit there is no guile.  
 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old  
 Through my roaring all the day long.  
 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me :  
 My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.  
 I acknowledge my sin unto thee,  
 And mine iniquity have I not hid.  
 I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ;  
 And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.  
 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee  
 In a time when thou mayest be found :  
 Surely in the floods of great waters  
 They shall not come nigh unto him.  
 Thou art my hiding-place ;  
 Thou shalt preserve me from trouble ;  
 Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.  
 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou  
     shalt go :  
 I will guide thee with mine eye.  
 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no  
     understanding :  
 Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,  
 Lest they come near unto thee.  
 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked :  
 But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass  
     him about.  
 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous :  
 And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

" O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath :  
 Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.  
 For thine arrows stick fast in me,



And thy hand presseth me sore.  
There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger;  
Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.  
For mine iniquities are gone over mine head :  
As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me,  
My wounds stink, and are corrupt  
Because of my foolishness.  
I am troubled ; I am bowed down greatly ;  
I go mourning all the day long.  
For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease :  
And there is no soundness in my flesh.  
I am feeble and sore broken :  
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.  
Lord, all my desire is before thee ;  
And my groaning is not hid from thee.  
My heart panteth, my strength faileth me :  
As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.  
My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore ;  
And my kinsmen stand afar off.  
They also that seek after my life lay snares for me ;  
And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and  
imagine deceits all the day long.  
But I, as a deaf man, heard not ;  
And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.  
Thus I was as a man that heareth not,  
And in whose mouth are no reproofs.  
For in thee, O Lord, do I hope :  
Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.  
For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice  
over me :  
When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against  
me.



For I am ready to halt,  
 And my sorrow is continually before me.  
 For I will declare mine iniquity;  
 I will be sorry for my sin.  
 But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong:  
 And they that hate me wrongfully, are multiplied.  
 They also that render evil for good  
 Are mine adversaries:  
 Because I follow the thing that good is.

Forsake me not, O Lord:  
 O my God, be not far from me.  
 Make haste to help me,  
 O Lord my salvation."

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness:

According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,  
 And cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions:  
 And my sin is ever before me.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,  
 And done this evil in thy sight:

That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,  
 And be clear when thou judgest.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;  
 And in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:

And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.



Make me to hear joy and gladness ;  
That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.  
Hide thy face from my sins,  
And blot out all mine iniquities.  
Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from thy presence ;  
And take not thy Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ;  
And uphold me with thy free spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ;  
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.  
Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of  
my salvation :

And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.  
O Lord, open thou my lips ;  
And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.  
For thou desirest not sacrifice ; else would I give it :  
Thou delightest not in burnt-offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit :  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion :  
Built thou the walls of Jerusalem.  
Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifice of righteousness,  
with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering :  
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar."

" Hear my prayer, O Lord,  
And let my cry come unto thee.  
Hide not thy face from me  
In the day when I am in trouble ; incline thine ear  
unto me :  
In the day when I call, answer me speedily.



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For my days are consumed like smoke,  
And my bones are burned as a hearth.  
My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;  
So that I forget to eat my bread.  
By reason of the voice of my groaning,  
My bones cleave to my skin.  
I am like a pelican of the wilderness:  
I am like an owl of the desert.  
I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.  
Mine enemies reproach me all the day;  
And they that are mad against me are sworn against me.  
For I have eaten ashes like bread,  
And mingled my drink with weeping,  
Because of thine indignation and thy wrath:  
For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.  
My days are like a shadow that declineth;  
And I am withered like grass.

But thou, O Lord, shalt endure forever;  
And thy remembrance unto all generations.  
Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion:  
For the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come.  
For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,  
And favor the dust thereof.  
So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord:  
And all the kings of the earth thy glory.  
When the Lord shall build up Zion,  
He shall appear in his glory.  
He will regard the prayer of the destitute,  
And not despise their prayer.  
This shall be written for the generation to come.  
And the people which shall be created shall praise the  
Lord.



For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;  
From heaven did the Lord behold the earth;  
To hear the groaning of the prisoner;  
To loose those that are appointed to death;  
To declare the name of the Lord in Zion,  
And his praise in Jerusalem;  
When the people are gathered together,  
And the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

He weakened my strength in the way;  
He shortened my days.  
I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my  
days:

Thy years are throughout all generations.  
Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:  
And the heavens are the work of thy hands.  
They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:  
Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;  
As a vesture shalt thou change them,  
And they shall be changed:  
But thou art the same,  
And thy years shall have no end.  
The children of thy servants shall continue,  
And their seed shall be established before thee."

" Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.  
Lord, hear my voice:  
Let thine ears be attentive  
To the voice of my supplications.  
If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who shall stand?  
But there is forgiveness with thee,  
That thou mayest be feared.



I wait for the Lord,  
My soul doth wait,  
And in his word do I hope.  
My soul waiteth for the Lord  
More than they that watch for the morning :  
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.  
Let Israel hope in the Lord :  
For with the Lord there is mercy,  
And with him is plenteous redemption.  
And he shall redeem Israel  
From all his iniquities."

There is a small volume of biography, written by a distinguished divine, which is a striking illustration of the adaptation of this psalm to all the deepest experiences of repentance. A negro, gifted by nature with unusual intellect, was bribed to murder. Sentenced to the state prison for life, he had time for sober reflection. He learned to read, and began the study of the Bible. The copy of the living oracles he used is still preserved. The fifty-first psalm is *enamelled* by the pressure of the convict's finger, as he repeatedly read, word by word, the confession, especially the prayer for deliverance from "blood-guiltiness." He became so humble and holy he was pardoned, and, when he died, mourned by the whole community in which he lived.



What a bold and fearless rebuke of tyrants and unjust judges is the eighty-second psalm ! No testimony left to the world could more clearly establish David's essential integrity and magnanimity of character.

The one hundred and nineteenth might be called the Bible psalm. It is a profound, practical, and loving song of meditations upon the Scriptures. It is divided into parts equal in number to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and marked by them, to assist the memory. The blessedness of the devout student of the Bible, and *how* to read this holy volume, are urged with tender earnestness and great beauty of language.

It is the more striking, when we reflect upon the small manuscript Bible the Hebrews then possessed, and that, without the story of the cross, over which the devout monarch would have bowed with rapture, singing, as Isaiah prophesied of the Redeemer, with solitary grandeur and sweetness.

From the one hundred and forty-fifth psalm to the close of the psalter, the songs are a swelling strain of praise to God, the Almighty King. Of these we select the last but two,



because of its wonderful comprehensiveness, sweeping the whole circle of creation for voices of thanksgiving to the Lord of all. It reminds us of Job's eloquent enumeration of God's mighty works, from Orion and the Pleiades flashing on the nightly dome, to the "crooked serpent" in the dust of earth. We think it will interest youthful readers, at least, to have, in connection with this psalm, a fine paraphrase of it, written by the distinguished Dr. Ogilvie, when only sixteen years of age. We doubt not that he sings now, with David, in glory eternal, —

" Praise ye the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord from the heavens :

Praise him in the heights.

Praise ye him, all his angels :

Praise ye him, all his hosts.

Praise ye him, sun and moon :

Praise him, all ye stars of light.

Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,

And ye waters that be above the heavens.

Let him praise the name of the Lord :

For he commanded, and they were created.

He hath also established them forever and ever :

He hath made a decree which shall not pass.

Praise the Lord from the earth, .

Ye dragons, and all deeps.



Fire and hail ; snow and vapor :  
Stormy wind fulfilling his word :  
Mountains, and all hills ;  
Fruitful trees, and all cedars :  
Beasts, and all cattle ;  
Creeping things, and flying fowl :  
Kings of the earth, and all people ;  
Princes, and all judges of the earth :  
Both young men and maidens ;  
Old men, and children :  
Let them praise the name of the Lord :  
For his name alone is excellent ;  
His glory is above the earth and heaven.  
He also exalteth the horn of his people,  
The praise of all his saints ;  
Even of the children of Israel,  
A people near unto him.  
Praise ye the Lord."

"Begin, my soul, th' exalted lay,  
Let each enraptured thought obey,  
And praise the Almighty's name.  
Lo ! heaven and earth, and seas and skies,  
In one melodious concert rise,  
To swell th' inspiring theme.

Ye fields of light, celestial plains,  
Where gay transporting beauty reigns,  
Ye scenes divinely fair,  
Your Maker's wondrous power proclaim,  
Tell how he formed your shining frame,  
And breathed the fluid air.



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Ye angels, catch the thrilling sound;  
While all th' adoring thrones around  
His boundless mercy sing;  
Let every listening saint above  
Wake all the tuneful soul of love,  
And touch the sweetest string.

Join, ye loud spheres, the vocal choir;  
Thou, dazzling orb of liquid fire,  
The mighty chorus aid:  
Soon as gray evening gilds the plain,  
Thou, moon, protract the melting strain,  
And praise him in the shade.

Thou, heaven of heavens, his vast abode,  
Ye clouds, proclaim your forming God,  
Who called yon worlds from night;  
'Ye shades, dispel!' th' Eternal said;  
At once th' involving darkness fled,  
And nature sprung to light.

Whate'er a blooming world contains,  
That wings the air, that skims the plains,  
United praise bestow:  
Ye dragons, sound his awful name  
To heaven aloud; and roar acclaim,  
Ye swelling deeps below.

Let every element rejoice:  
Ye thunders, burst with awful voice  
To him who bids you roll:  
His praise in softer notes declare,  
Each whispering breeze of yielding air,  
And breathe it to the soul.



To him, ye graceful cedars, bow ;  
Ye towering mountains, bending low,  
Your great Creator own :  
Tell, when affrighted nature shook,  
How *Sinai* kindled at his look,  
And trembled at his frown.

Ye flocks that haunt the humble vale,  
Ye insects fluttering on the gale,  
In mutual concourse rise ;  
Crop the gay rose's vermeil bloom,  
And waft its spoils, a sweet perfume,  
In incense to the skies.

Wake, all ye mountain tribes, and sing ;  
Ye plummy warblers of the spring,  
Harmonious anthems raise  
To him, who shaped your finer mould,  
Who tipped your glittering wings of gold,  
And tuned your voice to praise.

Let man, by nobler passions swayed,  
The feeling heart, the judging head,  
In heavenly praise employ ;  
Spread his tremendous name around,  
Till heaven's broad arch rings back the sound,  
The general burst of joy.

Ye, whom the charms of grandeur please,  
Nursed on the downy lap of ease,  
Fall prostrate at his throne ;  
Ye princes, rulers, all adore ;  
Praise him ye kings, who makes your power  
An image of his own.



Ye fair, by nature formed to move,  
O praise the eternal Source of love,  
With youth's enlivening fire.  
Let age take up the tuneful lay,  
Sigh his blessed name — then soar away,  
And ask an angel's lyre."

There is a single psalm — the seventy-second — dedicated by David to his successor and gifted son, Solomon. It predicts his peaceful and splendid reign, and gives, in connection with it, a vision of Christ's coming and kingdom. The psalm is one of rare beauty of imagery, and full of comforting truths to the Christian.

"Give the king thy judgments, O God,  
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.  
He shall judge thy people with righteousness,  
And thy poor with judgment.  
The mountains shall bring peace to the people,  
And the little hills, by righteousness.  
He shall judge the poor of the people,  
He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break  
in pieces the oppressor.  
They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure,  
Throughout all generations.  
He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass :  
As showers that water the earth.  
In his days shall the righteous flourish ;  
And abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth..



He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,  
And from the river unto the ends of the earth.  
They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;  
And his enemies shall lick the dust.  
The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring  
presents :  
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.  
Yea, all kings shall fall down before him :  
All nations shall serve him.  
For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth ;  
The poor also, and him that hath no helper.  
He shall spare the poor and needy,  
And shall save the souls of the needy.  
He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence :  
And precious shall their blood be in his sight.  
And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of  
Sheba :  
Prayer also shall be made for him continually ; and daily  
shall he be praised,  
There shall be a handful of corn in the earth  
Upon the top of the mountains :  
The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon :  
And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.  
His name shall endure forever :  
His name shall be continued as long as the sun :  
And men shall be blessed in him :  
All nations shall call him blessed.  
Blessed be the Lord God,  
The God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.  
And blessed be his glorious name forever :  
And let the whole earth be filled with his glory.  
Amen and Amen."



Bishop Horne eloquently says of the connection of the psalms with Christ, "This little volume, like the paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, everything that groweth elsewhere, 'every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food,' and, above all, what was there lost, but is here restored — THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDEN.

"And it appears to have been the manual of the Son of God in the days of his flesh, who, at the conclusion of his last supper, is generally supposed, and that upon good grounds, to have sung a hymn taken from it; who pronounced on the cross the beginning of psalm twenty-second — 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and expired with a part of psalm thirty-first in his mouth — 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Thus He who had not the Spirit by measure, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who spake as man never spake, yet chose to conclude his life, to solace himself in his greatest agony, and, at last, to breathe out his soul in the Psalmist's words rather than his own. No tongue of



man or angel, as Dr. Hammond justly observes, can convey a higher idea of any book, and of their felicity who use it aright."

Respecting that hymn in the "upper room," perhaps not far from the very spot where David's palace stood, who has not wondered what it was, and whether Jesus joined in his own sacramental dirge?

The custom of the Jews to sing at the pass-over from psalm one hundred and thirteenth to the one hundred and eighteenth inclusive, sheds some light on the touching inquiry. Certainly the hundred and sixteenth is a strain the Savior might have appropriately chosen for that occasion of mingled joy and grief, with Gethsemane and Calvary in near prospect!

In the sixth chapter of Hebrews the eighth psalm is quoted with reference to the Messiah's supremacy. In Romans fifteenth, the forty-ninth verse of the eighteenth psalm is introduced, and the nineteenth, in the tenth chapter of the same Epistle.

Paul, in Hebrews tenth, quotes from the fortieth psalm, and in the fourth and fifth chapters from the ninety-fifth.



Matthew gives a reason why Jesus spake to the multitude in parables from the seventy-eighth psalm; and Jesus himself cites the hundred and tenth psalm in Matthew twenty-second as referring to his exaltation and reign.

Again, in John eighteenth, the Savior goes to the forty-first psalm for a prediction of the cruel betrayal by Judas. On the great day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit's harvest work was inaugurated, the hundred and thirty-second psalm gives point to the apostolic appeal. It is affirmed that David knew and wrote of the Messiah which was to come, crowning his work of redemption by his resurrection from the dead.

But we must leave the admirer of Hebrew poetry and friend of Jesus, to his own study of the Messianic Psalms.

We turn, with a sigh of regret, from the hallowed lyrics.

The great biblical critic Kitto laments justly that the literary charms of the sacred oracles are so generally overlooked. The reasons are, man's natural aversion to the solemn truths which they present, the idea



that inspiration excludes the Scriptures from the walks of general literature, and the "vicious education" which the leading minds receive.

Gifted but irreligious men "eye the sacred volume askance," as if it were an enemy; and the culture of all our schools scarcely recognizes it, in comparison with other ancient classics.

The prevailing education of the day, from "early youth to manhood, is almost entirely of a heathen complexion. Greek and Latin, not Hebrew, engage the attention; Homer and Horace, not Moses and Isaiah, are our class-books, skill in understanding which is made the passport to wealth and distinction."

The poetical portions of the Scriptures, in connection with the wonderful scenes related, have furnished the materials for the greatest productions of modern bards. Had not Moses written his annals of a blighted Eden, Milton would never have given the world "Paradise Lost." The same is true of other poems which have immortalized their authors,—the facts and fire they contain were borrowed from the exhaustless treasures of revelation.



The Bible has created the highest civilization of the world, embalmed its best literature, and is yet to have "its controlling influence in the culture and commerce of the globe."

We add a few eloquent quotations from distinguished writers, not because the Bible needs their vindication or eulogy, but to direct the attention of readers, who, perhaps, have overlooked the "literary attractions" of the Book of Life, to its appreciation by gifted minds.

Schlegel, the great German, says, "These writings form a fiery and godlike fountain of inspiration, of which the greatest of modern poets have never been weary of drinking; which has suggested to them their noblest images, and animated them for their sublimest flights."

Inquires the no less able Englishman, Cowley, "What can we imagine more proper for the ornaments of wit or learning in the story of Deucalion than in that of Noah? Why will not the actions of Samson afford as plentiful matter as the labors of Hercules? Why is not Jephtha's daughter as good a woman as



Iphigenia? And the friendship of David and Jonathan more worthy celebration than that of Theseus and Besethous? Does not the passage of Moses and the Israelites into the Holy Land yield incomparably more poetical variety than the voyages of Ulysses or Æneas? Are the obsolete, threadbare tales of Thebes and Troy half so stored with great historical and supernatural actions as the wars of Joshua, of the Judges, and of divers others? Can all the transformations of the gods give such copious hints to flourish and expatiate on as the true miracles of Christ, or of his prophets and apostles?"

Writes the fiery and erratic Scotchman, Gilfillan, of the one hundred and fourth psalm, "It is said by Humboldt to present a picture of the entire Cosmos; and he adds, 'We are astonished to see, within the compass of a poem of such small dimensions, the universe, the heavens, and the earth, drawn with a few grand strokes.' Its touches are indeed few, rapid — but how comprehensive and sublime! Is it God? — he is 'clothed with light as with a garment,' and when he takes his morning or his evening walk, it is on the



'wings of the wind.' The winds or lightnings?—they are his messengers or angels: 'Stop us not,' they seem to say, 'the King's business requireth haste.' The waters?—the poet shows them in flood, covering the face of the earth, and then as they now lie, enclosed within their embankments, to break forth no more forever. The springs?—he traces them by one inspired glance, as they run among the hills, as they give drink to the wild and lonely creatures of the wilderness, as they nourish the boughs on which sing the birds, the grass on which feed the cattle, the herb, the corn, the olive tree, and the vine, which fill the mouth, cheer the heart, and radiate round the face of man. Then he skims with bold wing all lofty objects—the trees of the Lord on Lebanon, 'full of sap;' the fir-trees, and the storks which are upon them; the high hills, with their wild goats, and the rocks, with their conies. Then he soars up to the heavenly bodies—the sun and the moon. Then he spreads abroad his wings in the darkness of the night, which 'hideth not from him,' and hears the beasts of the forest creeping abroad to seek their prey, and



the roar of the lions to God for meat, coming up, vast and hollow, like embodied sound, upon the winds of midnight. Then, as he sees the shades and the wild beasts fleeing together, in emulous haste, from the presence of the morning sun, and man, strong and calm in its light as in the smile of God, hieing to his labor, he exclaims, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom thou hast made them all!' He casts next one look at the ocean — a look glancing at the ships which go there, at the Leviathan which plays there; and then, piercing down to the innumerable creatures, small and great, which are found below its unlifted veil of waters. He sees, then, all the beings, peopling alike earth and sea, waiting for life and food around the table of their Divine Master — nor waiting in vain — till lo! he hides his face, and they are troubled, die, and disappear in chaos and night. A gleam, next, of the great resurrections of nature and of man comes across his eye. 'Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.' But a greater truth still succeeds, and forms the climax of the psalm (a truth Hum-



boldt, with all his admiration of it, notices not, and which gives a Christian tone to the whole) — '*The Lord shall rejoice in his works.*' He contemplates a yet more perfect Cosmos. He is 'to consume sinners' and sin 'out of' this fair universe; and then, when man is wholly worthy of his dwelling, shall God say of both it and him, with a yet deeper emphasis than when he said it at first, and smiling, at the same time, a yet warmer and softer smile, 'It is very good.' And with an ascription of blessing to the Lord does the poet close this almost angelic descant upon the works of nature, the glory of God, and the prospects of man. It is not merely the unity of the Cosmos that he has displayed in it, but its progression, as connected with the parallel progress of man; its thorough dependence on one Infinite Mind; the 'increasing purpose' which runs along it; and its final purification, when it shall blossom into the 'bright consummate flower' of the new heavens and the new earth 'wherein dwelleth righteousness,' — this is the real burden, and the peculiar glory of the one hundred and fourth psalm. We say not that the beauty of Scripture ever



did or ever can convert a soul, but it may often have attracted men to those means of spiritual influence where conversion is to be found. The leaves, not the flowers, of the tree of life, are for the healing of the nations; but surely the flowers have often first fascinated the eye of the wanderer, and led him near to eat and live. When Christianity arose, it 'streamed,' says Eusebius, 'over the face of the earth like a sunbeam;' and men were too much struck by its novelty, its bright and blessed revelations, its adaptation to their wants, to think much of the lovely hues, and soft charms, and lofty graces, by which it was surrounded. It is very different now, when it needs a perception of all those subsidiary attractions to induce multitudes of the refined and intellectual to devote due investigation to its claims.

"And besides such direct effects of Scripture poetry in drawing men to inquire into Scripture truth, and in confirming Christians in their attachment to it, there is a silent but profound indirect moral power wielded by it in the world. It has refined society, softened



the human heart, promoted deference and respect to woman, and tenderness to children, cleansed to a great degree the temple of our literature, and especially of our poetry and fiction; denounced licentiousness, while inculcating forgiveness and pity to those led astray, and riotous living, while smiling upon social intercourse; suspended the terrors of its final judgment over high as well as low, over the sins of the heart as well as of the conduct, over rich and respectable children of hell as well as over the devil's pariahs and poor slaves, and has branded such public enormities as war, slavery, and capital punishments with the inextinguishable mark of its spirit, and is destroying them by the breath of its power. We say Scripture *poetry* has done all this; for how feeble and ineffectual had been mere enactments and precepts, compared with the poems in which the gospel principles have been inscribed, the parables in which they have been incarnated — compared to such living scenes as Jesus holding up a child in the midst of his disciples, or saying to the woman taken in adultery, 'Go and sin no more;' or commending his mother



to his beloved disciple from the cross, or turning water into wine at Cana, or feasting with publicans and sinners; or to such pictures as Dives tormented in that flame, or of Christ seated on the great white throne; or to such denunciations as his reverberated woes against the formalists and hard-hearted professors of his day! If our antiquated Jerichos of evil be tottering, and have already, to some extent, tottered down, it is owing to the shout of poetic attack with which the genius of Christianity has been so long assailing them."

"In the nineteenth century, all our great British authors have more or less imbibed the fire from the Hebrew fountains. There had been, in the mean time, a reaction in the favor of them, as well as of other things 'old.' For fifty years the Bible, like its author, had been exposed on a cross to public ignominy; gigantic apes, like Voltaire, chattering at it; men of genius turned, by some Circean spell, into swine, like Mirabeau and Paine, casting filth against it; demoniacs, whom it had half-rescued and half-inspired, like Rousseau, making mouths in its face; till, as darkness blotted



out the heaven above, and an earthquake shook Europe around, and all things seemed rushing into ruin, men began to feel, as they did on Calvary, that this was all for *Christ's sake*; and they trembled: and what their brethren there could not or did not, they stopped ere it was too late. The authors of the sacrilege, indeed, were dead or hopelessly hardened, but their followers paused in time; and the mind of the civilized world was shaken back into an attitude of respect, if not of belief, in the Book of Jesus."

"Byron, in painting 'dark bosoms,' has often availed himself of the language of that Book, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Many of his finest poems are just expansions of that strong line he has borrowed from it:—

'The worm that cannot sleep, and never dies.'

His 'Hebrew Melodies' have sucked out their sweetness from the Psalms; and 'Cain,' his noblest production, employs against God the power it has derived from his Book."

"When Shelley was drowned, it was rumored that he had a copy of the Bible next his heart; 'and,' says Byron, 'it would have



been no wonder, for he was a great admirer of it as a composition.' ”

“We close a rapid glance at the more peculiar and striking of Scripture characters, by expressing our amazement, first, at their multitude; secondly, at their variety; thirdly, at the delicacy with which they are discriminated; fourthly, at the manner in which they are exhibited, — so artless, brief, and masterly, — not by analysis or descriptions, but by actions and words; fifthly, at the great moral and emblematical lessons which they teach; sixthly, at the fact that the majority of these characters have left duplicates to this hour; seventhly, at the honesty of the writers who record them; and, lastly, at this significant fact, — there is one character who appears transcendent above them all, at once in purity, power, and wisdom. There are spots in the sun; but there are none in thy beams, O Sun of Righteousness!

“This spotless Lamb *is*. He exists somewhere. He is, we believe, at God’s right hand. He is preparing, as he has promised, to come down. We must appear at his bar. Our lives must be tested and our nature



searched in the light of his countenance. Let us prepare for this meeting, which must be, and may be soon, by putting on the only character in which it shall be safe to confront his eye — that, namely, of little children. The Divine Child must be met by 'little children;' and amid their hosannas (as he entered into the ancient temple), must he enter again into the prepared and consecrated temple of earth and heaven. Let us listen to his voice, which he sends before him along his dread and glorious way, saying, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.' "

Mrs. Maria Jane Jewsbury, the poetess, and the familiar friend of Mrs. Hemans, in her "Letters to the Young," addressed to a lovely maiden, after writing very beautifully upon the intellectual and spiritual glories of Revelation, closes her epistle in these gentle, truthful words: —

"To this end, I entreat you to drink reverentially, deeply, constantly, at that unsealed fountain of glory, wisdom, beauty, and power, — the eternal Word of God. 'Then I will



trust you to wander at will amongst the writings of mere mortals; for you will then bear about with you a talisman of truth, an armor of strength, a new sense for enjoyment, which will reveal to you their errors, defend you from their assaults, enhance and purify their worth.

"O, dearest —, when I think of you, in this sweet season of youth, my heart yearns over you with the tender solicitude of one who can be young as you no more! Shall it be in vain? Will you give your affections, yet unmarked by a scar, to a world that will only wither them with its pleasures, or crush them beneath its cares? that pretends not to offer a blessing or a joy able to endure the touch of time, or shield the soul from sorrow? that has no heritage beyond the ever-changing present; no glory that is not founded in vanity, and doomed to destruction? whose votaries, when they have loved, served, flattered, worshipped, sacrificed, through life, ask forgetfulness as a last boon, and even that boon ask in vain? Will you surrender your mind, with all its budding energies, your sensibility yet in its spring-bloom, to the literature of that world which heeds not



the serpent and its sting, if the flowers that hide them be but fair? No, dearest —, you will not call the restraints which religion imposes on youth and on genius other than an easy yoke, which it is their glory and happiness to wear! You will not cast aside your Bible as a dull book, commanding and connected with duller duties; the perusal of it will not be the task-work and penance of some lonely hour of which conscience is the angry ruler; you will rather esteem it your mind's pleasure-garden, an intellectual Eden, containing what is 'good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise;' whilst the Tree of Life towers in the midst, neither barred off by prohibition, nor guarded by flaming sword. Whether reading for your soul's profit, or your mind's pleasure, you will exclaim, with Tertullian, 'I adore the fulness of the Scriptures.'

"Allow me then, my dear —, with an earnestness prompted by real regard, to explain wherein I conceive the true value of life consists; and when, to the best of my ability, I have done so, you will readily draw the proper inferences for yourself.



"Life, even at the longest, is short; at the happiest, it is full of vexation; in its prosperity, it is transitory; at its best estate, vanity. 'One generation cometh and another goeth;' the things we enjoy are passing, and we are passing who enjoy them. The Scriptures seem at a loss how to express its frailty with sufficient force: — 'a vapor' that vanisheth away — 'a flower' flourishing and fading in a day — 'a hand-breadth' — 'a watch in the night' — 'a sleep when one awaketh' — 'a dream' — 'a sound.' Yet upon this fleeting, changing life; upon that portion of its threescore years and ten allotted to us, depends eternity! — endless duration! — everlasting existence! It is the sword hanging by a single quivering hair. The heathen king was wisely reminded that he was mortal; let us, more wisely still, remember that we are immortal: not only that we are born to die, but that we die, to live forever. And how? Exactly in that state for which our present life has prepared us; either in union with, or alienation from, the exhaustless source of grace, glory, and happiness — God. Were you to ask a number of persons what was the



true end of life, each would give you a different reply : and unless there was a Christian present, each reply would be wrong. Riches make themselves wings ; the breath that gives fame, can destroy it ; pleasure is the spark that mounts upward and expires. In these is nothing enduring ; nothing that prepares an immortal being for future immortality ; nothing that arms the soul against the changes of time and the inroads of affliction ; nothing that in the end satisfies the soul. God gave this world, with all its possessions, to minister to the comfort of his creature man, but he knew that not one of them could fill the void within ; and, therefore, as a wise and tender friend, he says to each of us, ' Give *me* thy heart.' And it is for this heart also that the enemy of man contends. The knee may be bent in prayer, the ear listen to religious instruction, the lips repeat Scripture truth, the whole person seem occupied in religious duties — but for these he cares not ; he knows that the heart can alone give value to the offering ; and it is the heart he allures away. Our Savior implied this when he gave us that infallible rule for self-examination : ' Where



your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' At the great day of account, when the book shall be opened and the Judge set, the question will not be, Did you say your prayers? did you follow gayety? did you spend your time in frivolous employments? A single reference to a single test will suffice to cover with confusion, or fill with humble confidence, to open or shut the gates of heaven — 'Lovest thou me?'"

Two poets, one an honored, wicked, misanthropic, and unhappy man, the other a lovely, Christian, afflicted woman, have left in musical verse their appreciation of the Psalmist of Israel. Lord Byron, in his "Hebrew Melodies," sings sweetly, amid the gloom of his almost joyless life, of "the harp the monarch minstrel swept:" —

"The harp the monarch minstrel swept,  
The king of men, the loved of heaven,  
Which Music hallowed while she wept  
O'er tones her heart of hearts had given.  
Redoubled be her tears, its chords are riven!  
It softened men of iron mould,  
It gave them virtues not their own;  
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,  
That felt not, fired not to the tone,  
Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne.



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It told the triumphs of our King;  
It wafted glory to our God;  
It made our gladdened valleys ring,  
The cedars bow, the mountains nod:  
Its sound aspired to heaven, and there abode!  
Since then, though heard on earth no more,  
Devotion, and her daughter, Love,  
Still bid the bursting spirit soar  
To sounds that seem as from above,  
In dreams that day's broad light cannot remove."

When Mrs. Hemans wrote her noble sonnet on the "Poetry of the Psalms," the sounding notes of the eighteenth were ringing in her sympathetic spirit's ear.

"Nobly thy song, O minstrel! rushed to meet  
The Eternal on the pathway of the blast,  
With darkness round him, as a mantle cast,  
And cherubim to waft his flying seat,  
Amidst the hills that smoked beneath his feet,  
With trumpet voice thy spirit called aloud,  
And bade the trembling rocks his name repeat,  
And the bent cedars and the bursting cloud,  
But far more gloriously to earth made known  
By that high strain than by the thunder's tone,  
Than flashing torrents or the ocean's roll;  
Jehovah spoke through the inbreathing fire,  
Nature's vast realm forever to inspire  
With the deep worship of a living soul!"























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